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Asceticism and Sexuality in the Mythology of Śiva. Part I

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ASCETICISM AND  
SEXUALITY IN THE  
MYTHOLOGY OF  
ŚIVA<sup>1</sup>

PART I

A. INTRODUCTION

1. THE RESOLUTION OF MYTHOLOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS

Paradox is the very heart of Śaiva mythology. Although the apparently contradictory strains of Śiva's nature may well have originated at different times and places, they have resulted in a composite deity who is unquestionably whole to his devotees; this is why the Hindus accept and even glorify what might otherwise seem a meaningless patchwork, a crazy quilt of metaphysics. Yet the paradoxes are occasionally as confusing to the Hindu as to the outsider, and this perplexity is often directly expressed by characters within the myths, as well as being indirectly evidenced by the myth-maker's frequent muddling of myth components whose relationships are unclear to him.

In spite of this, one must avoid seeing a contradiction or paradox where the Hindu merely sees an opposition in the Indian sense—correlative opposites that act as interchangeable identities in

<sup>1</sup> This paper and the one to follow in a later issue form a summary of a Harvard dissertation soon to be published in book form with more extensive examples of each mythological theme and more detailed translations from the Sanskrit sources.

essential relationships. The contrast between the erotic and the ascetic tradition in the character and mythology of Śiva is not the kind of "conjunction of opposites" with which it has so often been confused; *tapas* (asceticism) and *kāma* (desire) are not diametrically opposed like black and white, or heat and cold, where the extreme presence of one automatically implies the absence of the other. They are in fact two forms of heat, *tapas* being the potentially destructive or creative fire that the ascetic generates within himself, *kāma* the heat of desire. Thus they are closely related in human terms, opposed in the sense that love and hate are opposed, but not mutually exclusive.

Claude Lévi-Strauss has said, "It is the nature of myth to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction."<sup>2</sup> Based as they are upon a paradox, many of the Śaiva myths may be analyzed in terms of Lévi-Strauss's oppositions and resolutions; the mediating principle that tends to resolve the oppositions is, in most cases, Śiva himself. Among ascetics he is a libertine and among libertines an ascetic; conflicts which they cannot resolve, or can attempt to resolve only by compromise, he simply absorbs into himself and expresses in terms of other conflicts. Where there is excess, he opposes and controls it; where there is no action, he himself becomes excessively active. He emphasizes that aspect of himself which is unexpected, inappropriate, shattering any attempt to achieve a superficial solution of the conflict through mere logical compromise.

He is able to mediate in this way because of his protean character; he is all things to all men. He merely brings to a head the extreme and therefore least reconcilable aspects of the oppositions, which, although they may be resolved in various ways on the divine level, are almost never reconcilable on the human level. This is in fact the very *raison d'être* of the myth;<sup>3</sup> according to Lévi-Strauss, "the extreme positions are only *imagined* in order to show that they are *untenable*."<sup>4</sup> In this way, the image of the married ascetic functions as a negative truth about one possible way of resolving the paradox at hand; and the image of Śiva, by

<sup>2</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in *Myth: A Symposium*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington, Ind.: American Folklore Society, 1958), p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Alan W. Watts, *The Two Hands of God: The Myths of Polarity*, Vol. II of *Patterns of Myth*, ed. Alan W. Watts (3 vols.: New York: George Braziller, 1963), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Story of Asdiwal," in *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, ed. Edmund Leach, Association of Social Anthropologists Monograph #45 (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967), pp. 29-30.

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expressing the extreme and therefore untenable position, illustrates the contradiction inherent in the social facts, the difficulty in human terms of reconciling conflicting moral injunctions.

The expression of contradiction is significant in itself, even without the possibility of resolution, for the problems are difficult to understand and to face, and the myth brings them to a level at which they can be manipulated, just as the unconscious disguises in dreams those elements of experience that cannot be dealt with directly. It is the function of the myth to admit the failure of society to reconcile essential contradictions.<sup>5</sup> The myths make the Hindu aware of the struggle and of its futility; they show him that his society demands of him two roles which he cannot possibly satisfy fully—that he become a householder and beget sons, and that he renounce life and seek union with God. The myth shows the untenable answer arrived at by compromise—the forest-dweller with his wife—and suggests a solution finally in the re-examination of the nature of the two roles, of the presence of each in the other, so that a balance may be sought without any of the unsatisfactory accommodations necessary in real life. The myth makes it possible to admit that the ideal is not attainable.<sup>6</sup>

One irrational answer to the insoluble problem occurs in an explicit form at many points in the myths where reason is trapped: the excuse of *bhakti*, of devotion of the worshiper toward the god and of the god toward the worshiper, a compelling love which overcomes all rational barriers. Although this is a fairly late solution, it merely makes explicit a tendency which is implicit in the earlier versions as well: the tendency to appeal to the emotions to transcend a rational impasse. This can justify both sides of Śiva's nature; he is hard put to explain his asceticism, since he shares none of the goals of human ascetics, being himself immortal, "released," and the god who grants boons to ascetics; therefore, he attributes his activity to *bhakti*. Thus, in spite of the fact that love for a woman is ostensibly incompatible with the goals of asceticism, Śiva is said to perform *tapas* in order to win the love of Pārvatī,<sup>7</sup> in order to keep the universe alive, for the sake of his devotees. Similarly, Śiva's sexual activity is rationalized in spite of his ascetic commitments; after arguing against marriage for a

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27–29.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Douglas, "The Meaning of Myth, with Special Reference to 'La Geste d'Asdiwal,'" in Leach, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> *Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa* (Bombay: Gujurati Printing Press, 1913), 22.34–43. *Skanda Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkaṭeśvara Steam Press, 1867), 1.1.21.15. Hereinafter, all Purāṇas will be cited by particular name alone after the first reference (e.g., *Mahābhāgavata*).



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yogi, Śiva concedes to the gods: "Nevertheless, I will do what you ask, for the benefit of the world. Though the practice of marriage is not suitable for me, as I delight only in *tapas*, nevertheless I will marry for the sake of my devotees."<sup>8</sup> Pārvatī herself says to Śiva, "You are the best among yogis, but out of pity you have become intent upon love-making."<sup>9</sup> It is pity alone that can transcend the austere logical purity of Śiva and introduce a merciful sentimentality. Only the emotional involvement, the pity of the gods, causes them to forget that they are above it all—as metaphysics demands—and reduces them to the human level—as mythology demands.

Even when logic can reconcile *tapas* and *kāma*, ascetic and householder, the desire to have it *both* ways remains; Śiva proves to Pārvatī that there is no logical reason for him to have a son, as a mortal man must have; she replies, "What you say is true, but nevertheless I wish to have a child. I long for the kiss of a son's mouth."<sup>10</sup> That "nevertheless" is the mythopoeic and philosophical nexus of the cycle of countless versions of myths, told and retold in an eternal search for the impossible solution.<sup>11</sup> The myth expresses the need that can never be fulfilled, that is always just out of reach on one side or the other, even in the world of the gods.

### 2. THE PARADOX: ŚIVA THE EROTIC ASCETIC

Since Western scholarship first became aware of Hindu mythology, the character of Śiva has remained an enigma. Only a small portion of the corpus of ancient Śaiva mythology has been translated from the Sanskrit; with this inadequate representation, it is not surprising that the mythology of Śiva was considered contradictory and paradoxical, for only the two ends of the spectrum were seen. Śiva the Creator and the Destroyer, Life and Death, the *coincidentia oppositorum*—this much was accepted as consistent with Indian metaphysical thought, and the apparent sexual ambiguity of the god was considered simply one more aspect of a basically ambiguous character or a result of the chance historical assimilation of two opposing strains. In the absence of critical

<sup>8</sup> *Śiva Purāṇa* (Benares: Paṇḍita Puṣṭakālaya, 1964), 2.2.16.30–36; cf. *Śiva* 2.3.24.60, –.66–67, and –.75. Here and throughout this paper, translations from Sanskrit texts will be summarized, rather than translated literally, and brackets will be placed around material so treated.

<sup>9</sup> *Śiva* 2.4.4.5.

<sup>10</sup> *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, ed. Hara Prasād Śāstrī, Bibliotheca Indica New Series (Calcutta, 1888–97), 2.60.15–17.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 229; and Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966), p. 22.

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editions or translations of the Śaiva Purāṇas,<sup>12</sup> with their rich variety of myths, the problem was never properly considered, and the very fact of its paradoxical nature was taken as an accepted quality of Śaiva thought on which further speculation could be based. René Grousset explained in terms of Śiva's ability to reconcile all contradictions the apparent conflict between his character as god of the *liṅga*, or phallus, and his fame as the ascetic who consumed with the fire from his third eye the god of love, Kāma.<sup>13</sup> But R. C. Zaehner expresses the enduring enigma of Śiva: "Permanently ithyphallic, yet perpetually chaste: how is one to explain such a phenomenon?"<sup>14</sup>

The problem was intensified by uncertainties regarding Śiva's place in the historical development of Hinduism. Failure to connect him with the Vedic gods Indra, Prajāpati, and Agni\* led to the assumption that the sexual elements of his cult were "non-Āryan," or at least non-Vedic;<sup>15</sup> and clear correspondences between Śaiva myths and Tantric cult<sup>16</sup> led others to seek the origins of Śiva's sexual ambiguity in this comparatively late development.† Yet what is striking about the problem is that it extends from the period of the Vedas and even earlier, from the prehistoric civilization of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappā, through the development of Tantrism, to the religion of present-day India.

Ancient Hindus as well as modern have been hard put to explain the Śaiva phenomenon. In a Sanskrit poem dating from perhaps A.D. 900, one of Śiva's own hosts muses upon his master:

If he is naked what need then has he of the bow?  
If armed with bow then why the holy ashes?  
If smeared with ashes what needs he with a woman?  
Or if with her, then how can he hate Love?<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The Purāṇas are Sanskrit texts composed between 300 B.C. and A.D. 800 for the most part, with considerable later additions and much material from an earlier date as well.

<sup>13</sup> René Grousset, *The Civilization of India* (New York: Knopf, 1931), p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Charles Zaehner, *Hinduism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 113.

\* See Section E (Part II).

<sup>15</sup> The Vedas are sacred texts composed in an archaic form of Sanskrit; the Rg Veda, the oldest and most important, reached its present form around 1200 B.C. The Atharva Veda, a collection of magical incantations not directly related to the Vedic sacrifice, was composed several centuries later.

<sup>16</sup> The Tantras are esoteric texts relating to the rites of certain cults which flourished from about the sixth century A.D.

† See below, Section D.

<sup>17</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa* of Vidyākara, ed. D. D. Kosambi and V. Gokhale, Harvard Oriental Series #42 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957); trans. as *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, by Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Harvard Oriental Series #44 (1965), verse #103. All verses from the *Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa* in this paper are cited in Ingalls' translation.

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### This paradox underlies one of the greatest Śaiva myths:

The demon Tāraka usurped the power of the gods, and it was fated that he could only be slain by a son born of Śiva and Pārvatī, the daughter of the mountain Himālaya. But Śiva was constantly performing *tapas* and had no desire to marry; Pārvatī came to serve him in his mountain hermitage, but he took no notice of her. At length, Indra, the king of the gods, sent Kāma, the god of desire, to excite Śiva; though Kāma succeeded in releasing one of his flower arrows toward Śiva's heart, Śiva maintained control of his emotions and burnt Kāma to ashes with the flame which shot forth from the third eye in the middle of his forehead.

Pārvatī then laid aside her royal garments and ornaments and performed such great *tapas* that Śiva resolved to marry her. He came to her in disguise and catalogued in great detail the faults of the god to whom she was devoted, but she remained steadfast. Śiva then revealed himself and their marriage took place.

When, after some time, the love-making of the couple had failed to produce the son needed by the gods, Indra sent Agni to interrupt Śiva and Pārvatī. He succeeded in this but was cursed by Pārvatī to bear the fiery seed of Śiva; unable to bear this torture, Agni placed the seed in the river Ganges, where it was found by the wives of the Seven Sages, known as the Kṛtikās. From the seed a child was born, named Skanda or Kumāra, who slew the demon Tāraka in battle.<sup>18</sup>

In one version of this myth, when the gods propose the match to Himālaya, he objects: "It is said that Śiva lives without attachments, and that he performs *tapas* all alone. How then can he

<sup>18</sup> The myth appears in the following Purāṇas: *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkateśvara Steam Press, 1959), 3.4.14.9–85. *Brahma Purāṇa* (Calcutta: Gurumandala Press, 1954), 34–38; 71–72; 128.3–46. *Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkateśvara Steam Press, 1857), 4.11.1–34; 4.30.30–101. *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, ed. Hara Prasād Sāstrī (4 vols.; Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series #102, Poona, 1935), 4.38–45; 3.1, 3.2, 3.8–9 and 3.14; 4.46.9–61. *Brhaddharma* 2.53.1–65. *Devibhāgavata Purāṇa* (Benares: Paṇḍita Puṣṭakālaya, 1960), 7.31.4–64; 7.40.38–40. *Kālikā Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkateśvara Steam Press, 1891), 4–13; 48.12–96. *Liṅga Purāṇa* (Calcutta: Vaṅgavāsī Press, 1812), 1.101–103. *Mahābhāgavata* 12, 14, 15, 20–30. *Matsya Purāṇa* (Poona: Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series #54, 1907), 148.17–24; 154.1–495; 158.25–50. *Padma Purāṇa* (Poona: Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series #131, 1893), 5.40.46–450; 5.41.118–142. *Saura Purāṇa* (Calcutta: Vaṅgavāsī Press, 1816 [Bengali script]), 53–62. *Śiva* 2.2.8–20; 2.3.1–55; 2.4.1–2. *Śiva Purāṇa*, ed. Rājarāma Gaṇeśa Bodaśa, with commentaries (Bombay: Ganpat Krishnaji Press, 1884; to distinguish this from the other *Śiva Purāṇa*, this Bombay edition will always be cited by *Samhitā*), Śatarudrasamhitā 3.33–35; Jñānasamhitā 9, 10, 13–19. *Skanda Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkateśvara Steam Press, 1867), 1.1.20–27; 1.2.22–26, –29.82–110; 5.1.34.1–80; 5.2.13.23–55; 5.2.20.1–25; 7.1.220.1–30; 7.3.40.4–23. *Vāmana Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkateśvara Steam Press, 1851), 6.26.107; 51–54; 57. *Varāha Purāṇa* (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, New Series, 1893), 22.1–45; 25.15–16.

The myth also appears in the following Sanskrit texts: Kālidāsa, *Kumārasambhava*, with the commentary of Mallinātha (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1955), 1–11. Jayaratha, *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* (Bombay: Kāvyaṃalā Series #61, 1897), 9.3–221. Vālmiki, *Rāmāyaṇa*, ed. G. H. Bhatt (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960), 1.34.13–20; 1.35–36.

The Kumāra birth story alone appears in: Somadeva, *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1930), 3.6.60–88. Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, *Mahābhārata*, ed. Vishnu S. Sukthankar *et al.* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933), 13.83–86 (hereafter, MHB).

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interrupt his trance, and how could he marry any woman but Satī [his wife in a former incarnation], who is dead?"<sup>19</sup> Explicit reasons for Śiva's behavior are given in the course of the myths, but the metaphysical arguments are both secondary and subsequent to the story line of the myth; if philosophy could resolve the problem at the start, there would be no need for the myth to mediate between the two opposed facets; the myth takes over where philosophy proves inadequate. Śiva himself is said to be troubled by the ambivalence in his character, for, when Kāma wounds him, shattering his trance and stirring his desire, Śiva muses, "I dwell ever in *tapas*; how is it then that I am enchanted by Pārvatī?"<sup>20</sup> Only involvement in the eternal cycle of the myth can reveal—even to the god himself—the answer to this question.

### 3. THE RESOLUTION OF THE AMBIVALENCE OF ŚIVA IN THE TEXTS

The solution is not an arbitrary construction of armchair scholarship, meaningless to the creators and preservers of the myths. Throughout Hindu mythology, the so-called opposing strands of Śiva's nature have been resolved and accepted as aspects of one nature. They *may* be separated in certain contexts, and are frequently confused and misunderstood even by the tellers of the tales, but in every age there have been notable examples of satisfactory resolution. The Śiva of Brahmin philosophy is predominantly ascetic; the Śiva of the Tantras is predominantly sexual; but even in each of these, elements of the contrasting aspect are present, and in the myths—which form a bridge between rational philosophy and irrational cult—Śiva appears far more often in his dual nature than in either one or the other.

As early as the Atharva Veda hymn to the *brahmacārīn* (chaste student), there is a detailed description of a sage with whom Jarl Charpentier has identified Śiva himself, the great ascetic creator but also the great *liṅga*-bearer, who spills his seed upon the earth.<sup>21</sup> The first explicit reference to Śiva in his ambiguous sexuality appears in the *Mahābhārata*:<sup>22</sup> "Whose semen was offered as an

<sup>19</sup> *Kālikā* 42.71–77.

<sup>20</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.21.70.

<sup>21</sup> Atharva Veda, with the commentary of Sāyaṇa, ed. Shankar Pāndurang Pandit (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1895), XI.5.5.–12; cf. Jarl Charpentier, "Über Rudra-Śiva," *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Kunde des Morgenlandes* XXIII (1909), p. 154; and Maurice Bloomfield (trans.), *Atharva Veda* (Oxford: Sacred Books of the East #42, 1897), p. 627.

<sup>22</sup> The *Mahābhārata* is the great epic of India, 200,000 lines composed between 300 B.C. and A.D. 300; the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the second epic, is much shorter, deals primarily with the adventures of Rāma, an avatar of Viṣṇu, and was composed during the same period.

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oblation into the mouth of fire, and whose semen was made into a golden mountain? Who else can be said to be a naked *brahmacārīn* with his vital seed drawn up? Who else shares half his body with his wife and has been able to subjugate Kāma?"<sup>23</sup> The seed spilt creatively and contained in chastity; the ultimate act of desire (androgynous union) and the conquest of desire—the essence of Śaiva mythology is in this passage.

The concept persists throughout the Purāṇas: Śiva says that if he marries, his wife must be a *yoginī* (female ascetic) when he does yoga, and a lustful mistress (*kāminī*) when he is full of desire.<sup>24</sup> The sage Nārada describes Śiva: "On Kailāsa mountain, Śiva lives as a naked yogi. His wife, Pārvatī, is the most beautiful woman in the universe, capable of bewitching even the best of yogis. Though Śiva is the enemy of Kāma, and is without passion, he is her slave."<sup>25</sup> So completely are the roles of ascetic and lover combined that the myth-makers themselves confuse them; in the story of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, the Seven Sages say to her: "How can you enjoy the pleasures of the body with an ascetic [*yati*] like him, so terrifying and disgusting?" But in another version of this same text they say: "How can you enjoy the pleasures of the body with a husband [*pati*] like him, so terrifying and disgusting?"<sup>26</sup> The sense remains the same in both readings, for the two roles are being compared and in fact interchanged.

A similar combination of roles appears in the myth of the Pine Forest, in which Śiva comes in disguise to a group of sages who are practicing violent asceticism with their wives; when the sages, accusing him of seducing their wives, castrate<sup>27</sup> him by a curse, Śiva reveals himself to them and teaches them to worship his fallen *liṅga*.<sup>28</sup> In one version of this myth, the sages' curse is

<sup>23</sup> MHB XIII, Appendix 1, #5, 47–50.

<sup>24</sup> Śiva 2.2.16.39; also Kālikā 9.49–50.

<sup>25</sup> Śiva 2.5.18.44–51.

<sup>26</sup> Matsya 154.331–333 and Padma 5.40.323–325.

<sup>27</sup> Throughout this paper, "castration" will refer to the mutilation of the phallus as well as or instead of the testicles.

<sup>28</sup> This myth is told in the following Purāṇas: *Brahmāṇḍa* 2.27.1–127. *Kūrma Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkaṭeśvara, 1926), 1.16.97–126; 2.38.1–83, 2.39.1–80. *Liṅga* 1.29, 1.31, 1.33–34. *Padma* 5.17.35–84. *Sāmba Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkaṭeśvara, 1942), 16.24–33, 17.1–22. *Saura* 69.34–54. *Śiva* 4.12.1–54. *Śiva*, *Jñānasamhitā* 42.1–51; *Dharmasamhitā* 10.78–233. *Skanda* 1.1.6.2–68; 5.2.8.1–45; 5.2.11.1–25; 5.3.38.6–68; 6.1.5–64; 6.258–59; 7.1.187.14–40; 7.3.39.5–38. *Vāmana* 6.60–93; 43.40–95; 44.1–39.

Also: *Haracaritāntāmaṇi* 10.3–188. Kṣemendra, *Darpadalana* (Bombay: Kāvyaṃālā Series #6, 1890), 7.1–71. *Yāgīśvara Māhātmya* (India Office MS #3719, reproduced by Wilhelm Jahn in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, LXX, 1916, pp. 310–20). R. Dessigane, Jean Filliozat, and P. Z. Pattabiramin, *La Légende des Jeux de Śiva à Madurai (Hālāśyamāhātmya)*

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this: "If we have served Śiva from our birth with *tapas*, then let the *liṅga* of this libertine fall to the earth."<sup>29</sup> Thus they swear by Śiva the ascetic to destroy Śiva the erotic, not realizing that the two are one. This is implicit in other versions of the myth as well, for the sages use the *tapas* of Śiva (their fiery curse) against the lust of Śiva (his *liṅga*), and must be punished before they are able to realize the unity of the two powers.

For the yogi himself, using Śiva as his model, the god might appear in either aspect according to the worshiper's need: "The yogi who thinks of Śiva as devoid of passion himself enjoys freedom from passion; the yogi who meditates upon Śiva as full of passion himself will certainly enjoy passion."<sup>30</sup> Nor was this choice limited to the initiated; a popular hymn to Śiva in Orissa says, "He is the much beloved husband of Gaurī [Pārvatī] and the only object of adoration by the ascetic."<sup>31</sup> It would seem that this ambiguity is comprehensible and acceptable to Hindus of various ages and beliefs, notwithstanding its apparent logical contradiction and the difficulties which arise when its implications are literally applied to an actual or mythological social situation.

### 4. THE ICONIC RESOLUTION OF THE PARADOX: THE ITHYPHALLIC YOGI

Sir John Marshall noted in the prehistoric Indus civilization a seal on which was depicted a male god whom he identified as a prototype of Śiva;<sup>32</sup> the figure is seated in a posture of yoga and has an exposed, erect phallus. There is good reason to support the identification of this figure with Śiva,<sup>33</sup> but even if this is not accepted, the seal is evidence of a very early correlation between asceticism and sexuality. The image of the ithyphallic yogi persists throughout Hindu sculpture as an attribute of Śiva.<sup>34</sup>

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(Pondichéry: Institut Francais d'Indologie, #19; 2 vols.; 1960), #32; and Dessigane, Filliozat, and Pattabiramin, *Les Légendes Śivaïtes de Kāñcīpuram* (Pondichéry: #27, 1964), #40.

<sup>29</sup> *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 10.74–75.

<sup>30</sup> *Yogaśāstra*, quoted in the *Tarkarahasyadīpikā*, cited by D. R. Bhandarkar, "Lakuliṣa," in *Report of the Archeological Survey of India* (Delhi, 1906–7), p. 190.

<sup>31</sup> Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Folk Element in Hindu Culture* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), p. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization* (3 vols.; London: Arthur Probsthain, 1931), I, chap. v; Pl. 15, #17; pp. 52 and 55n.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India* (London: Penguin, 1952), p. 202; Amalananda Ghosh, "Śiva: His Pre-Āryan Origin," in *Indian Culture II* (1936), p. 767; Zaehner, *Hinduism*, pp. 20 and 110.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (2 vols.; Madras: Law Printing House, 1916), I, p. 22; Jitendra Nath Banerjĳa, *The Development of Hindu Iconography* (2d. ed.; Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1956), pp. 48 and 457, Pl. xxxix #2; K. C. Panigrahi, "Sculptural Representations of Lakuliṣa and

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The ambiguity of its connotation is possible because, although the erect phallus is of course a sign of priapism, in Indian culture it is a symbol of chastity as well. The basic expression for the practice of chastity is the drawing up of the seed (*ūrdhvaretas*); but, by synecdoche, the seed is often confused with the *liṅga* itself, which is "raised" in chastity. Thus the *Mahābhārata* gives Śiva the epithets *ūrdhvaretas* and *ūrdhvaliṅga*, "he whose seed is raised up, whose *liṅga* is raised up."<sup>35</sup> Even without this confusion, the image of the erect phallus is in itself accepted as representative of chastity; when the seed is drawn up, Śiva is a pillar (*sthānu*) of chastity;<sup>36</sup> yet the pillar is also the form of the erect *liṅga*: "It is in this form of the Lord of Yogins that he becomes Sthānu or of *liṅga* form."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, in the context of the Hindu philosophy of sexual powers, Śiva's chastity is the source of his erotic power,<sup>†</sup> and so the erect phallus can represent both phases.

In Sanskrit literature, Śiva is often described as ithyphallic,<sup>38</sup> particularly in the Pine Forest myth.<sup>39</sup> Frequently this condition is equated with a state of chastity;<sup>40</sup> the commentary on Śiva's *Mahābhārata* epithet states the rationalization of the ithyphallic state as chaste rather than erotic: "He is called *ūrdhvaliṅga*, because the lowered *liṅga* sheds its seed, but not the raised *liṅga*."<sup>41</sup> The ithyphallic condition has been attributed by some, not to priapism, but to the Tantric ritual of seminal retention;<sup>42</sup> § to a certain extent, this technique may be considered a manifestation of yogic chastity, but Śiva's raised *liṅga* is symbolic of the power

other Pāsupata Teachers," in *Journal of Indian History*, XXXVIII, iii (1960), p. 640; Ghosh, *op. cit.* (n. 33 above), pp. 765-66; Alain Daniélou, *L'Érotisme Divinisé* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1962), pp. 20, 32, plate on p. 29; Hermann Goetz, *The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State* (Oxford, 1950), Pl. 4, Fig. 4; Philip Rawson, *Indian Sculpture* (New York: Dutton, 1966), p. 46; R. D. Banerjee, *The Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture*, Archeological Survey of India #47 (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1933), Pls. LII a-b, LIIa, LIV c, LV b and d, LVI b; Ramprasad Chanda, *Explorations in Orissa*, Memoirs of the Archeological Survey of India #44 (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1930), Pls. VII 1-2; also *Matsya Purāṇa* 260.7.

<sup>35</sup> MHB XIII.17.45.

<sup>36</sup> *Matsya* 4.30-32; *Skanda* 7.2.9.5-17.

<sup>37</sup> Vasudeva Sarana Agrawala, *Śiva Mahādeva, The Great God: An Exposition of the Symbolism of Śiva* (Benares: Veda Academy, 1966), p. 3.

<sup>†</sup> See below, Section B.

<sup>38</sup> MHB XIII.17.45, -.74, -.83; XIII.146.17; X.7.37; *Liṅga* 1.20.61; *Padma* 5.17.57.

<sup>39</sup> *Śiva*, *Dharmasamhitā* 10.79; *Vāmana* 43.71.

<sup>40</sup> MHB XIII.17.58; VII.173.83-84, -.92; XIII.146.10-17.

<sup>41</sup> *Mahābhārata*, with the commentary of Nilakaṇṭha (Bombay: 1862), XIII.17 45-46.

<sup>42</sup> Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (London: Rider & Co., 1965), p. 296.

§ See below, Section D 4.

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to spill the seed as well as to retain it. || Thus Alain Daniélou writes :

Shiva, the god of eroticism, is also the master of the method by which the virile force may be sublimated and transformed into a mental force, an intellectual power. This method is called Yoga, and Shiva is the great yogi, the founder of Yoga. We see him represented as an ithyphallic yogi. . . . Assuming the various postures of Yoga, Shiva creates the different varieties of beings. . . . Then in the posture of realisation (*siddhāsana*) he reintegrates into himself all the universe which he has created. It is in this posture that he is most often represented. His erect phallus is swollen with all the potentialities of future creations.<sup>43</sup>

The yogi here gathers up his creative powers, retaining the promise of future creation in the form of the erect phallus, the embodiment of creative *tapas*.

For the image retains its primary, more natural significance, as is clear from the statues of the ithyphallic Śiva embraced by Pārvatī;<sup>44</sup> it may symbolize actual, as well as potential or sublimated, eroticism. In a myth told among the Lanjhia Saora, it is said that a woman found an amputated phallus, and, "thinking it to be Mahadeo's [Śiva's] *liṅga*, took it home and worshiped it. At night she used to take it to bed with her and use it for her pleasure."<sup>45</sup> In a similar manner, a female figure carved on the temple at Konarak is clearly using a stone Śiva-*liṅga* as a sexual device,<sup>46</sup> an act which seems to be explicitly prohibited in the lawbooks.<sup>47</sup> The wives of the Pine Forest sages touch Śiva's erect *liṅga*,<sup>48</sup> as does Pārvatī in a well-known sculpture;<sup>49</sup> his erect phallus is adorned sometimes with red chalk and bright white charcoal and sometimes with bracelets as he dances erotically in the Pine Forest.<sup>50</sup> In this way, the image of the ithyphallic yogi retains its ambiguities in myth, icon, and cult, simultaneously representative of chastity and sexuality.

|| See Section E 4-5 (Part II).

<sup>43</sup> Daniélou, *op. cit.* (n. 34 above), p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20; J. N. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, Pl. xxxix #2; Mulk Raj Anand, *Kāma Kalā: Some Notes on the Philosophical Basis of Hindu Erotic Sculpture* (Geneva: Nagel, 1960), Pl. lxiv.

<sup>45</sup> Verrier Elwin, *Myths of Middle India* (Oxford: Cumberlege, 1949), p. 473.

<sup>46</sup> Kanwar Lal, *The Cult of Desire: An Interpretation of the Erotic Sculpture of India* (2d ed.: London: Luxor Press, 1967), Pl. 73.

<sup>47</sup> Kautilya, *Arthasāstra*, ed. Julius Jolly (Lahore: Punjab Sanskrit Series #4, Motilal Banarsidass, 1923), 4.13.41.

<sup>48</sup> *Skanda* 7.3.39.10.

<sup>49</sup> Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>50</sup> *Brahmaṇḍa* 2.27.12; *Padma* 5.5.45.



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### B. SEX AND ASCETICISM IN INDIAN RELIGION

#### 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHASTITY AND CREATIVE "TAPAS"

Chastity was characteristic of Indian asceticism from the very start. The Upaniṣads say that one may realize the Self by practicing *tapas* in the forest, free from passion;<sup>51</sup> a Purāṇa passage states: "The 88,000 sages who desired offspring went South and obtained graves; but the 88,000 who did not desire offspring went North and obtained immortality."<sup>52</sup> In a late version of the story of Viṣṇu's avatar as a boar, Śiva appears in a characteristic role, that of the ascetic who rescues a man from the troubles arising from marital involvements:

Once long ago, when the Earth was in danger of drowning in the cosmic floods, Viṣṇu took the form of a boar and saved her. Śiva then said to him, "Now that you have accomplished the task for which you assumed the form of a boar, you must abandon that form. The Earth cannot bear you and is becoming exhausted; she is full of passion, and she has become heated in the water. She has received a terrible embryo from you, who will be born as a demon harmful to the gods. You must abandon this erotic boar form." Viṣṇu agreed with Śiva, but he kept the form of a boar and continued to make love to the Earth, who had taken the form of a female boar. Many years passed, and the Earth brought forth three sons, and when Viṣṇu was surrounded by his sons and his wife he forgot all about his promise to abandon his body. The sons played together and shattered all the worlds, but even though Viṣṇu knew of this, he did not stop them, for he loved his sons; his passion for his wife grew greater and greater. Finally he remembered his promise and begged Śiva to kill him; Śiva took the form of the mythical *śarabha* beast and killed Viṣṇu and his three sons, and the essence of Viṣṇu was freed from the boar form.<sup>53</sup>

Deluded by involvement with a woman and children, Viṣṇu finds himself unable to do what he knows to be right; and though he wishes to be freed of his body—as the sage wishes to escape from rebirth—he needs the help of Śiva, the great ascetic, to enlighten him.

Although in human terms asceticism is opposed to sexuality and fertility, in mythological terms *tapas* is itself a powerful creative force, a generative power of ascetic heat. In a late R̥g Vedic creation hymn, it is from *tapas* that the One is born, and in the Atharva Veda hymn to the *brahmacārin*, the chaste sage creates by

<sup>51</sup> *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.11; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.10.1–6; in *One Hundred and Eight Upanishads* (Isha and Others), ed. Wāsudev Laxmaṇ Shāstrī Paṇṣikar (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1913).

<sup>52</sup> *Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra* [*Aphorisms on the Sacred Law of the Hindus*, by Āpastamba], ed. Georg Bühler (2d ed.; Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1892), 2.9.23.4; cf. *Vāyu Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkaṭeśvara, 1867), 1.50. 213–20.

<sup>53</sup> *Kālikā* 30.1–42, 31.1–153.

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performing *tapas* in the ocean.<sup>54</sup> In the Brāhmaṇas,<sup>55</sup> Prajāpati, the Creator, assumes the *brahmacārin*'s role :

Prajāpati was alone here in the beginning. He desired, "May I exist, may I reproduce myself." He exerted himself and performed *tapas*, and when he was exhausted and heated the waters were created from him. For waters are born from the heated Man. The waters said, "What is to become of us?" He said, "You shall be heated." They were heated and created foam. For foam is born in heated water.<sup>56</sup>

The creative power of heat, particularly when placed in water, is the starting point in all of these cosmogonic myths; from *tapas*, Prajāpati proceeds to create fire, light, air, sun, moon, dawn, etc.<sup>57</sup>

### 2. THE SEDUCTION OF THE ASCETIC

The ascetic must remain chaste to generate *tapas*: this belief underlies the famous *Mahābhārata* myth of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, whose chastity is able to produce rain :

King Lomapāda was guilty of a transgression against a Brahmin, and so Indra# sent no rain in his land. The king's ministers advised him to bring to the palace the sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, who had lived in complete chastity in the forest all his life, and had never seen a woman. They said, "If Ṛṣyaśṛṅga may be enticed and lured into your kingdom, Indra will send rain to you immediately." The king sent a prostitute to the forest, who served Ṛṣyaśṛṅga and plied him with garlands, drinks, and embraces, until he was overpowered with love for her, emotionally aroused and maddened with passion. Although his father warned him against such "demons," the young sage followed the prostitute to the women's quarters of the palace, and the rain fell. King Lomapāda gave his daughter, Śāntā, to Ṛṣyaśṛṅga in marriage.<sup>58</sup>

The Epic states that Ṛṣyaśṛṅga's purity and chastity give him the power to bring the rain,<sup>59</sup> and although the prostitute embraces him, she does not actually seduce him. Even when he is overcome by her charms, he invites her to perform *tapas* with him, and later he describes her to his father as a particularly delightful sort of

<sup>54</sup> *Rg Veda [Rig-Veda Samhita]*, with the commentary of Sāyaṇa, ed. Max Müller (6 vols.; London: William H. Allen, 1890-92) X.129.3; Atharva Veda XI.5.5, -7, -10, and -26.

<sup>55</sup> The Brāhmaṇas are sacred texts elaborating upon the details of the ritual of the Vedas; they were composed from 800 to 500 B.C.

<sup>56</sup> *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the White Yajur Veda, with the commentary of Sāyaṇa, ed. Satyavratā Sāmasvāmī (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1903) 6.1.3.1-2; cf. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, with the commentary of Sāyaṇa, ed. Kāśinātha Śāstry Āgāse (Poona: Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series #32, 1896) 10.1.5 and 11.6.4.

<sup>57</sup> *Kausitaki Brāhmaṇa [Sāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa]*, ed. Gulbarāya Vajasaṅkara Chaya (Poona: Ānandāśrama #65, 1911) 6.1; and *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* of the Black Yajur Veda, with the commentary of Sāyaṇa, ed. Rajendra Mitra (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1859), 2.2.9.1.

# See Section E 2 (Part II).

<sup>58</sup> MHB III.110.17-36; -111.1-22; -112.1-18; -113.1-12.

<sup>59</sup> MHB III.110.3 and -25-26.

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ascetic, with beautiful "rosaries" (garlands) and "matted locks" (long hair perfumed and bound with gold).<sup>60</sup> This is the ascetic viewpoint reduced to the absurd.

On the other hand, there is much to suggest that he is in fact seduced, and that it is his fall from chastity, rather than his unbroken chastity, that brings the rain; he must be "enticed," rather than summoned by royal command in order for the rain to fall, and he is so overpowered with love for the prostitute that he in no way resists her enticements but follows her to the palace. Leopold von Schroeder considered the myth the reworking of a generation rite in which sexual union actually took place, the union itself causing the rain;<sup>61</sup> this simple analogy works on the principle of sympathetic magic. Von Schroeder's view is substantiated by the Buddhist version of the tale:

Isisinga [Rṣyaśrṅga] performed such great *tapas* that Sakka [Indra] was shaken and determined to break down his virtue. For three years he sent no rain, advising the king of Benares, "Send your daughter Nalinikā to break the virtue of Isisinga and it will rain; for his fierce *tapas* has caused the rain to stop." She went to him and enticed him, and he thought her to be some marvellous ascetic. His virtue was overcome, his meditation broken off, and he made love to her. Then she ran away from him, and Sakka sent rain that day. Isisinga longed for Nalinikā, still thinking that she had been an ascetic, until his father returned and realized from Isisinga's report that a woman had broken his virtue. He told his son, "This was a female demon; you must always avoid them," and Isisinga then returned to his meditation.<sup>62</sup>

This version shows the classical pattern of the myth of the ascetic seduced by a prostitute, an important theme in Indian literature,<sup>63</sup> as, indeed, in many other literatures. Indra appears as the enemy of the ascetic whose chastity is a *threat* to rain and

<sup>60</sup> MHB III.111.10, -112.1-18.

<sup>61</sup> Johann Jakob Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (New York: Dutton, 1930), p. 292.

<sup>62</sup> "Nalinikā Jātaka," in *Jātaka*, with commentary [*Tales of the Anterior Births of Gotama Buddha*], ed. Viggo Fausbøll (7 vols.; London: Trübner, 1877), #526, V, 193-209.

<sup>63</sup> *Brahmavaivarta* 4.31-33; *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (Bombay: Venkateśvara, 1890), 1.27-54, 2.4-16; *Bytal Pucceesee*, trans. Captain W. Hollings (4th ed.; Lucknow: Newul Kishore Press, 1884), pp. 4-5; Sir George Abraham Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, IX, IV (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1916), p. 74; *Caitanya Carita Antya* 3.94, cited by Edward C. Dimock, Jr., in *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava Sāhajīyā Cult of Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 154-55; cf. George Weston Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānpata Yogis* (Calcutta: YMCA Publishing House; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 212; *Jaiminīya [Tālavakāra] Brāhmaṇa* of the Sāma Veda (Nagpur: Sarasvatī-vihāra Series #31, 1954), 2.405; Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Bollingen Series LVI; New York: Pantheon, 1958), p. 257; Leopold von Schroeder, *Mysterium und Mimik im Rig Veda* (Leipzig: H. Haessel Verlag, 1908), p. 166; Lal, *op. cit.* (n. 46 above), pp. 67, 102, Pl. 104; Abbé J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, trans. and ed. Henry K. Beauchamp (3rd ed.; Oxford, 1959), p. 310.

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fertility, not a source of it; he brings about the seduction of R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga just as he causes Kāma to assist Pārvatī in the seduction of Śiva.<sup>64</sup> After the seduction, the ascetic returns to his meditation; the phases of chastity and sexuality alternate.

In terms of the general pattern, this Buddhist version would seem to be older than that of the *Mahābhārata*, the theme of the seduced ascetic being more basic in India than that of the incorruptible ascetic. Moreover, the *Rāmāyaṇa* version of the myth tends also to support the suggestion of von Schroeder; for, although it tells the story in much the same way as the *Mahābhārata*, it introduces it with a statement that R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga was sent for in order to perform a sacrifice for King Daśaratha to obtain a son<sup>65</sup>—an indication of the sage's own sexual powers. In the tale of R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga, as in the story of the temptation of Śiva by Pārvatī,\*\* there seems to be a very real ambiguity about the success or failure of the seduction. In fact, it is the combination of the two—the sage's original steadfastness and his eventual surrender—that produces the desired result, but different versions emphasize one aspect or the other to produce an apparent paradox.

Except in the more ribald versions of the theme, and sometimes even there, the ascetic learns something of value from his contact with the woman of the world; an important path of communication is established between the two opposed world views. The necessity for a prostitute as the partner of the ascetic is not merely a result of the metaphysics of the conjunction of opposites, of the representatives of *tapas* and *kāma*, but in part a consequence of the simple logistics of the necessary plot: after his experience with the woman, the ascetic must be free to return to his yoga, in order to avoid the problems attendant upon the combination of asceticism and marriage. The one woman who can allow him to do this is the prostitute, who is sexually free just as he is, moving below the morals of conventional Hinduism just as he moves above them. Much of the R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga story resembles the tale of Enkidu in the Gilgamesh Epic; Enkidu had lived in chastity among the animals in the wilderness until a harlot was sent to tame him so that he could become human and gentle enough to befriend Gilgamesh.<sup>66</sup> The Hindu ascetic must be "tamed" as well, and it is Śiva himself

<sup>64</sup> *Mahābhāgavata* 22.34–43; *Matsya* 47.113–127 and –.170–213; *Padma* 5.13.257–313; *Vāyu* 2.35–36; *Śiva* 2.3.17.19–22; *Saura* 53.48; *Kumārasambhava* 3.4; MHB V.15.2–25.

<sup>65</sup> *Rāmāyaṇa* I.8.7–23, I.9.1–14; I.7 and I.10.

\*\* See Section G 1–4 (Part II).

<sup>66</sup> Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet 1, column 3, lines 42 ff., Heidel edition.

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—taking the place of Indra, as he often does—who usually undertakes this task, to remind the yogi of the need to participate in the world of the flesh as well as the world of the spirit.††

### 3. CHASTITY AND THE LOSS OF CHASTITY

In the attempt to combine and give full value to the experiences of the two worlds, the myth of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga comes to terms with a problem central to Hindu mythology: Both chastity and the loss of chastity are necessary for fertility. The earliest expression of this conflict appears in an obscure hymn of the Ṛg Veda,<sup>67</sup> a dialogue between the sage Agastya and his wife Lopāmudrā:

1. [Spoken by Lopāmudrā]: “For many years I have exhausted myself and now I have become old. Age wears away the beauty of bodies. Men should go to their wives.” [Sāyaṇa, the commentator, notes that the wives also practise *tapas*.]

2. “The pious sages of ancient times, who conversed about sacred truths with the gods, ceased [from the performance of *tapas*] for they did not find the End. [Sāyaṇa: Without achieving success in *brahmacarya* [chaste study] they died.] Women should go with their husbands.”

3. [Spoken by Agastya]: “Not in vain is all this toil, which the gods encourage. We must undertake it with all efforts. By this we will win the race that is won by a hundred artifices, when we unite together as a pair.” [Sāyaṇa: “We will win the battle of sexual intercourse when we procreate in the proper way”—in this way he accedes to the sexual union that she spoke of.]

[According to von Schroeder, ritual intercourse took place here, between the recital of verses 3 and 4.<sup>68</sup> Karl Geldner says that “the enjoyment of love will be masked here with various images.”]<sup>69</sup>

4. [Lopāmudrā]: “Desire for the bull who roars and is held back [Sāyaṇa: he holds back his seed as he practises chastity] has overcome me, coming upon me from all sides.” [The poet]: Lopāmudrā entices the man; the foolish woman sucks dry the wise man.

5. [Agastya]: “By this Soma which I have drunk, in my innermost heart I say: Let him forgive us if we have sinned, for a mortal is full of many desires.”

6. [The poet]: Agastya, digging with spades [Geldner: “A new image for the enjoyment of love”], wishing for progeny, children, and strength, nourished both paths [Sāyaṇa: *kāma* and *tapas*], for he was a powerful sage. Among the gods, he found fulfilment of his desires.

In this complex and intriguing hymn, Agastya’s position is unclear and yet crucial. A traditional Indian interpretation is expressed in the *Bṛhaddevatā*: “The sage began, from desire of secret union, to talk to his wife, the illustrious Lopāmudrā [sic], when she had bathed after her period. With the two stanzas she expressed what she wished to do. Then Agastya, desiring to make

†† See Section H 1 (Part II).

<sup>67</sup> Ṛg Veda I.179.

<sup>68</sup> Von Schroeder, *op. cit.* (n. 63 above), p. 160.

<sup>69</sup> *Der Rig-Veda*, trans. [into German] Karl Friedrich Geldner (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard Oriental Series #33–35, 1951), I, 257.

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love to her, satisfied her with the two following stanzas.”<sup>70</sup> The statement that Agastya himself desires the union seems to be based upon the third verse as well as the fourth, which the *Bṛhad-devatā* attributes to Agastya; Lopamudrā merely convinces him to break his chastity sooner than he had intended. Yet the verse of expiation seems to indicate that Agastya has been persuaded to violate his vow. Hermann Oldenberg suggests that the circumstances might have been such that Agastya’s “holy purity” was not actually violated—that she might have approached him while he was asleep, for instance;<sup>71</sup> this would imply that the drinking of the Soma was an expiation for the mere desire, rather than the act, but it seems more likely that actual, conscious union did take place. In spite of the expiation, von Schroeder maintains that “what they did was not a sacrilege but a richly blessed act, and it is rewarded, rather than punished”; and he notes that intercourse in fertility rites is especially powerful when performed by one who has practiced chastity until then.<sup>72</sup>

Here is the core of the matter: it is necessary to amass powers of fertility by the practice of chastity, and then to put them to use by the breaking of that very vow; the views are complementary, not opposed. Jakob Wilhelm Hauer saw in the Agastya hymn two “quite opposed concepts of ecstatic practice,” the praise of chastity (verses 1–3) and the praise of intercourse as a source of power and fertility (verses 4–6).<sup>73</sup> The verses cannot be divided quite so neatly; both views appear throughout the hymn, constantly readjusting the balance. The poet of the hymn speaks with disdain of the foolish woman who sucks the wise man dry, an instance of the traditional misogyny of the Indian ascetic tradition, but he also notes that Agastya found strength and power by nourishing both paths, chastity and fertility. The hymn speaks of sin and expiation, but it speaks too of the winning of the race and the fulfilment of desires among the gods.

In the *Mahābhārata* version of the myth of Agastya, the sage desires to break his vow of chastity and in fact has difficulty in persuading Lopamudrā to break *her* vow:

The chaste sage Agastya was asked by his ancestors to marry and procure offspring to perform the death rites for them in perpetuity. Agastya created

<sup>70</sup> *Bṛhaddevatā*, attributed to Śaunaka, ed. Arthur Anthony Macdonnell (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard Oriental Series #5–6, 1904), 4.57–58.

<sup>71</sup> Hermann Oldenberg, “Ākhyāna-Hymnen im Ṛg Veda,” ZDMG XXXIX (1884–85), pp. 65–68.

<sup>72</sup> Von Schroeder, *op. cit.*, pp. 159, 161–62.

<sup>73</sup> Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, *Die Anfänge der Yogapraxis im Alten Indien* (Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1922), p. 38.

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a beautiful woman whom he caused to be born as the daughter of the King of Vidarbha, named Lopāmudrā. When Agastya asked the king for her, the king was unwilling to give her to him, but Agastya threatened to burn everything with the power of his *tapas*, and Lopāmudrā herself asked to be given to Agastya. He then asked her to discard her ornaments and to dress herself in rags, bark clothes, and deer-skins; then they practised *tapas* together. When he saw her shining with her *tapas*, the sage asked her to make love with him, but she said, ashamed, "I will not approach you dressed in the rags of asceticism, for this ochre robe must not be made impure in any way. But dress me and yourself in heavenly ornaments, and I will come to you." He argued that if he used his powers of *tapas* to obtain riches it would destroy his ascetic powers, but she was adamant. After various adventures, Agastya succeeded in fulfilling the conditions, and Lopāmudrā bore him a great son.<sup>74</sup>

Several elements of the R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga tale may be seen here: the princess comes to the ascetic at the command of her father, to avoid a curse (here, the threat of *tapas* is a direct force of fire, replacing the indirect drought of the R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga tale); she performs asceticism with him and exchanges ascetic garments for royal ones (having first changed from royal to ascetic at his request), as R̥ṣyaśr̥ṅga mistakes royal ones for ascetic. The force of the Vedic hymn of Agastya is retained, although the roles are somewhat reversed; the combined forces of chastity and sexuality produce a son.

#### 4. THE EROTIC APPEAL OF THE ASCETIC

What is striking about the *Mahābhārata* reworking of the Agastya hymn is the passion which Lopāmudrā stirs when she becomes a female ascetic (a role which, according to Sāyaṇa, she plays in the Vedic hymn); in the earlier version, it is Agastya's ascetic status which excites her: "She desires the bull who is held back." In either direction, the force is clear and psychologically valid: the ascetic, whose chastity generates powers of fertility, becomes an object of desire, in part merely because he is forbidden. A tale illustrating this point is told about Pūran, the disciple of the great yogi Gorakh Nāth:

Pūran performed *tapas* for thirty-six years. When Gorakh Nāth was about to make him a saint, one of the disciples said, "Test him first by making him beg alms from Rāni Sundrān ["the Beautiful Queen"]." Pūran went there, covered with ashes, and a handmaiden told the Queen, "A handsome yogi with red eyes has come here. He will not accept alms from anyone but you. When I saw his beauty I fainted." When the Queen saw Pūran, she said, "I would kill the faqīr that rubbed the ashes on you. Why should you be a saint? Be my husband." Pūran returned to Gorakh Nāth with the alms, whereupon his ears were pierced in the ceremony that made him a saint. But the Queen went to Gorakh Nāth and said, "If you are a true guru,

<sup>74</sup> MHB III.94.1-27, -.95.1-24, -.97.17-25.

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give Pūran to me as alms." Gorakh Nāth told Pūran to go with her, and when they were alone she said, "Be my husband; don't be a saint, for Gorakh gave you to me for alms." Pūran stayed with her for four hours and then left her. Broken hearted, the Queen said to Gorakh, "Give him to me or I will kill myself; or at least make me a disciple too, so that I may remain with him." But Gorakh said, "He whose clothes are red and whose mind is clear never returns from the wilds. Is a yogi anyone's friend?" And the Queen killed herself.<sup>75</sup>

The yogi and the princess; the woman's offer to do asceticism with him; the ultimate return to the wilderness—these are familiar themes. His asceticism is a challenge to her, as Agastya's is to Lopāmudrā, Ṛṣyaśṛṅga's to the prostitute, Śiva's to Pārvatī. The intentional wrongheadedness which sometimes underlies this phenomenon can be seen in the words placed in the mouth of a Buddhist monk in a satirical play: "Ah, how delightful is the touch of this Kapālīnī [ascetic woman of the Śaiva Kapālīn sect]! Often have I ardently embraced widows . . . but such rapturous emotions were never excited as by touching the rising breasts of this Kapālīnī."<sup>76</sup> A widow is the epitome of the sexually taboo Hindu woman; the sin of sexual contact with her is exceeded only by the consequences of incest, and intercourse with a female ascetic is a crime tantamount to incest.<sup>77</sup>

But the appeal of the ascetic is best understood in terms of powers rather than of morals. "The yogin becomes as strong and beautiful as a god, and women desire him, but he must persevere in chastity; on account of the retention of semen there will be generated an agreeable smell in the body of the yogin."<sup>78</sup> By "drawing up his seed," the yogi preserves all his powers, particularly, of course, those he is explicitly holding in, sexual powers.

### 5. THE EROTIC POWERS OF THE ASCETIC

Even in the *Kāmasūtra*, the textbook of erotic science and hence ostensibly opposed to the ascetic establishment, this concept, so basic to *all* Hindu thought, emerges: The successful lover is one who has conquered his senses and is not excessively passionate; he obtains his powers by *brahmacarya* and great meditation.<sup>79</sup> The chaste ascetic is not only sexually attractive; he is sexually active. Many of the central images of sculpture at Khajuraho are of a

<sup>75</sup> Sir Richard Carnac Temple, *The Legends of the Punjab* (3 vols.; Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1884, 1885, 1900), II.441–48.

<sup>76</sup> *Prabodhacandrodaya* of Kṛṣṇamitra (Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1898); III.18.

<sup>77</sup> *Nāradaśmṛti* [*The Institutes of Nārada*], with the commentaries of Asaḥāya *et al.*, ed. Julius Jolly (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1885), 12.73–75; *Viṣṇuśmṛti* [*Institutes of Viṣṇu*], ed. Julius Jolly (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1880), 36.7.

<sup>78</sup> *Yogatattva* 59, ff.; cited by Eliade, *op. cit.* (n. 63 above), p. 129.

<sup>79</sup> *Kāmasūtra* of Vatsyāyana (2 vols.; Bombay: Venkaṭeśvara, 1856), 7.2.55–57.



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couple engaged in the sexual act while both have their legs folded in the yogic "lotus seat";<sup>80</sup> in the philosophy of Tantric yoga, even the solitary meditation of the yogi in the lotus seat produced an internal sexual experience, the union of Śiva and the goddess Kuṇḍalinī within the yogi's body: "The *maithuna* [intercourse] of this divine couple produces amṛita [the elixir of immortality], which overflows the yogin's body and bestows on him a state of supreme bliss."<sup>81</sup>

Ascetics appear throughout Hindu mythology in creative and erotic roles. When Brahmā wishes to create the worlds, he procures as his wife the female ascetic Śatarūpā and engages in intercourse with her;<sup>82</sup> her yoga is her creative power. The women of the Pine Forest use their *tapas* as an erotic power, for when they are overcome with passion for Śiva they say, "You must consent to our desires, for we are female ascetics and we do what we wish, whether we are naked or clothed."<sup>83</sup> In the Hindu lawbooks, a *brahmacārīn* or ascetic, in the sense of one who has completed a vow of chastity, is said to be a particularly suitable bridegroom.<sup>84</sup>

The paradox only arises when sexual powers are actually used by a man who is supposedly practicing chastity *at that time*, as in the Khajuraho sculptures or in the character of Śiva, simultaneously yogi and priapic god. Various solutions are offered on various levels: Hindu society divided the life-span into separate ages with a type of sexual activity appropriate to each; Śaiva mythology substitutes for this the principle of cycles alternating in a manner roughly parallel to the different "ages"; another solution, applied in the mythology to common yogis as well as to Śiva himself, is to allow the ascetic to make use of his powers in various ways other than by the actual sexual act which constitutes the technical breaking of his vow. These solutions, none of them entirely satisfactory, will be discussed at length below.††

### 6. SEXUAL PLEASURES AS THE REWARD FOR ASCETICISM

One example of the division into temporal cycles is the belief that the yogi gains by his chastity not only sexual powers but the right

<sup>80</sup> Anand, *op. cit.* (n. 44 above), Pl. xxxvi, entitled "A Yogic posture of the Kaula cult."

<sup>81</sup> F. D. K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ: An Introduction to Indian Symbolism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1960), p. 91; cf. Anand, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>82</sup> *Śiva* 2.1.16.12.

<sup>83</sup> *Śiva*, Dharmasamhitā 10.126.

<sup>84</sup> Baudhāyana, cited in the *Saṃskāraprakāśa* of the *Viramitrodaya* of Mitra Miśra (Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series #139, 1913), p. 755; and *Liṅga Purāṇa*, cited *ibid.*, p. 752.

†† See below, Sections C and D; also Section H 2-4 and Section I (Part II).

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to use them; Agastya wins Lopāmudrā by means of the threat of his *tapas*, a force which he also uses to satisfy the conditions under which she will allow him to enjoy her. Śiva says to Pārvatī, “By *tapas* one wins *kāma*,”<sup>85</sup> and this concept appears often in passages encouraging the practice of *tapas*. The belief that beautiful women await one in heaven is old; a funeral hymn of the Atharva Veda beseeches the funeral fire not to burn up the phallus of the dead man, for this reason.<sup>86</sup> The *apsaras*-es, celestial prostitutes, are the particular reward of the ascetic, just as their earthly counterparts are his frequent temptation in mortal life. The *apsaras* Ūrvasī says to Arjuna, “All the men of Pūru’s race that come here delight us through their ascetic merit, and they do not transgress by this.”<sup>87</sup> The theme is popular in court poetry:

His culminating fruit  
of no little asceticism in past lives is this:  
that after showing all her charms  
in a hundred motions taught by love,  
a fair one lies now in his loving arms,  
the seal of sleep upon her loosened limbs.<sup>88</sup>

The temporal division in this is clear: sensual pleasures follow asceticism. The other phase of the cycle appears in the concept of *tapas* as expiation for sexual transgressions and as a means to restore sexual powers. §§

But often the erotic and ascetic experiences are in fact considered simultaneously. The structure of Sanskrit and the conventions of Sanskrit verse are such that large elements of a poem, and indeed whole poems, may be construed in either of two entirely different ways. One such punning verse may be read in either the ascetic mode [*śānta*] or the erotic mode [*śṛṅgāra*]:

Ascetic: Do *tapas* somewhere on the sandy bank of the Narmadā river,  
O you whose heart is peaceful, confident one, firm one.  
What other action is there that brings a blessing in this world,  
than to unite with the highest Self?

Erotic: In summer, when my heart is stirred and emboldened,  
I pursue a play-mate and enjoy the lust of love.  
What other action is there that brings pleasure in this world,  
than to unite with another man’s wife?<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> *Skanda* 6.257.11.

<sup>86</sup> Atharva Veda IV.34.2.

<sup>87</sup> MHB III, Appendix 1, #6, 120–21.

<sup>88</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa* #562; cf. #565; cf. also Bhartṛhari *Śatakatrayam*, ed. D. D. Kosambi [*The Epigrams Attributed to Bhartṛhari*] (Bombay: Singhi Jain Series #23, 1948), #136.

§§ See Sections I and I 1 (Part II).

<sup>89</sup> *Rasikarāñjana* of Rāmacandra [*Rāmacandra’s Ergötzen der Kenner*], ed. Richard Schmidt (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1896), #9.

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The spirit of this verse is hardly devotional, and it brings up the question of the intention behind the myths of the seduced ascetic. The poet Bhartṛhari cast aspersions on the concept of *apsaras*-es won by asceticism :

You cheat yourself and others with your lies,  
Philosopher, so foolish-wise,  
In that you state  
A celibate  
Has greater grace to win the prize.  
Are there not heavenly nymphs beyond the skies ?<sup>90</sup>

It should be evident that there is a serious and ancient tradition for ascetic practices to culminate in erotic rewards, but there are also many myths in which the aroused ascetic is simply a dirty old man to be mocked ; when the ascetic himself is the active party in the seduction, as in the *Mahābhārata* tale of Agastya, the myth often shades off into a closely related folk theme : the false ascetic who uses his *tapas* as a pretext with which to obtain lustful rewards.

### 7. THE HYPOCRITICAL ASCETIC

The jurist Āpastamba remarked, "The billy-goat and a Brahmin learned in the Vedas are the lewdest of all beings."<sup>91</sup> This opinion was shared by Buddhists and Europeans<sup>92</sup> and prevails to the present day in India.<sup>93</sup> Śaiva ascetics in particular are depicted as "foolish, illiterate, voracious, lecherous, and scoundrelly";<sup>94</sup> Mahendravarman's *Mattavilāsa* ("The Madman's Dalliance")<sup>95</sup> is a lengthy satire on the excesses committed by Śaiva ascetics, and tales of this type abound in Indian literature.<sup>96</sup> The philosophical basis for the sexuality of yogis does not automatically justify

<sup>90</sup> Bhartṛhari #120; trans. by John Brough, in *Poems from the Sanskrit* (London : Penguin, 1968), #9.

<sup>91</sup> Āpastamba 2.6.14.13.

<sup>92</sup> *Majjhima Nikāya*, Cūladhammasamādānasutta (Pali Text Society; London : V. Trenckner, 1888), vol. I, pp. 305-06; Dubois, *op. cit.*, pp. 592-94; Meyer, *op. cit.* (n. 61 above), p. 160.

<sup>93</sup> P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* (Government Oriental Series B 6; Poona : Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930-62), V, II, 1094; Nirad Chaudhuri, *The Continent of Circe: An Essay on the Peoples of India* (London : Chatto and Windus, 1965), pp. 192, 203; Eric Newby, *Slowly Down the Ganges* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), pp. 228-32.

<sup>94</sup> Maurice Bloomfield, "On False Ascetics and Nuns in Hindu Fiction," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* XLIV (1924), p. 204.

<sup>95</sup> *Mattavilāsaprahasana* of Mahendravarikramavarman, ed. T. Gaṇapati Sāstri (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series #50; Trivandrum : Superintendent Government Press, 1917).

<sup>96</sup> *Kathākośa* [*The Kathākośa or Treasury of Stories*], trans. C. H. Tawney (London : Royal Asiatic Society, 1895), pp. 130-35; *Prabodhacandrodāya* III.19; *Kathāsaritsāgara* 3.1.30-54; 15.30; 24.83; 121.3; *Ten Tales from the Tantrapākhyaṇa*, ed. George T. Artola, *Adyar Library Bulletin*, XXIX, 1-4; #1.

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every breach of the vow of chastity; the Bengali saint Caitanya remarked: "I can never again look upon the face of an ascetic who has had anything to do with a woman. The senses are weak, and are attracted toward worldly things; even a wooden image of a woman can steal the mind of a sage. . . . Those false ascetics are contemptible."<sup>97</sup>

This is clearly based on a feeling quite opposed to the satirical spirit of the literary condemnations; as a *true* ascetic, one who knows the ideal, Caitanya objects to the charlatans who give them all a bad name. This attitude underlies many versions of the Pine Forest myth: Śiva, the true ascetic, exposes the weakness of those ascetics who pretend to imitate him but who lust for their wives and are not truly dedicated.<sup>98</sup> Yet Śiva himself is often pictured as a hypocritical ascetic. The Pine Forest sages actually call him a false ascetic,<sup>99</sup> an accusation substantiated by the accompanying description:

When Śiva failed to be satisfied by making love to Pārvatī, he then went naked into the Pine Forest in the guise of a madman, his *liṅga* erect, his mind full of desire, wishing to obtain sexual pleasure with the wives of the sages.<sup>100</sup>

Śiva himself confesses to being a false ascetic when he replies to the taunts of the sages' wives:

The women: "You are the foremost of wantons; how can you wander begging without embarrassment?"

Śiva: "There is no expedient but wandering as a beggar in order to reveal my own songs, gazes, and words among women in different places."<sup>101</sup>

In a story of one of the many quarrels between Śiva and Pārvatī, she accuses him of ascetic hypocrisy:

Śiva and Pārvatī were playing at dice, and she won from him all his ornaments and even his loincloth. Then all the hosts and attendants were embarrassed and turned their heads away, and Śiva was ashamed and angry. He said to her, "All the sages and gods are laughing at me; why have you done this? If you have won, at least let me keep my loincloth." But Pārvatī laughed and said, "What need have you for a loincloth? You went naked into the Pine Forest and seduced the wives of the sages, with the pretext of begging; and then when you had gone they gave you great honor. The sages there caused your loincloth to fall; therefore you must cast it off now, for you have lost it at dice anyway."<sup>102</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Caitanya Carita Antya* 2.116–18; trans. Dimock, *op. cit.* (n. 63 above), p. 45.

<sup>98</sup> *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 10.3–32; *Yāgiśvaramāhātmya* 27b.10; *Vāmana* 43–44; *Darpadalana* 7.17–71; *Saura* 69.

<sup>99</sup> *Śiva*, *Dharmasaṃhitā* 10.187.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.78–80.

<sup>101</sup> *Utpreṣṣavallabha*, *Bhikṣāṇakāvya* (Bombay: Kāvya-mālā Series #12, 1895) 9.13.

<sup>102</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.34.116–30.

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Śiva's role of the false ascetic in the Pine Forest is supported by various other stories in which he behaves similarly.

Once, Śiva saw some beautiful women and *apsaras*-es and was overcome by desire for them. He invited them to go far away in the sky with him. Pretending to do *tapas*, the god in fact intended to make love to them.<sup>103</sup>

The god may use his real asceticism as a false pretext—even to achieve a goal to which his asceticism legitimately entitles him.

This confusion is due to the ambivalent attitude toward asceticism in Hindu society; although from the time of the Upaniṣads much lip service was paid to the ascetic, a large branch of conventional Hinduism always maintained a very real hostility toward renunciation. The Śaiva ascetic was considered a despiser of Vedic rites and religious institutions,<sup>104</sup> and his mere existence was a slur upon the conventional society which he rejected. The non-Vedic Vṛātya ascetic was classed with the dregs of society, such as incendiaries, poisoners, pimps, spies, adulterers, abortionists, atheists, and drunkards.<sup>105</sup> Fringe members of society could find a comparatively respectable status among the Śaiva sects; this led to a general decline in the moral reputation of Śaivas.<sup>106</sup> Ascetics were frequently employed as spies, and spies masqueraded as ascetics,<sup>107</sup> giving them all a bad name; by extension, Śiva himself was eventually condemned as the author of their rites. In this manner, Śiva derived his reputation as a great smoker of Bhang (marijuana) from the yogis, who to this day are said to indulge in the use of drugs.<sup>108</sup>

### 8. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCREATION

The most frequent and compelling objection to asceticism is based upon its conflict with the deep-seated Hindu belief in the importance of descendants, a belief central to Indian thought from the time of the Vedas to the present day. The Vedas certainly did not revere celibacy;<sup>109</sup> Lopāmudrā summed up Vedic opinion when

<sup>103</sup> *Padma* 5.53.1–2.

<sup>104</sup> C. V. Narayan Ayyar, *Origin and Early History of Śaivism in South India* (Madras: University of Madras Press, 1936), p. 16.

<sup>105</sup> MHB V.35.39–41.

<sup>106</sup> Ayyar, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–63.

<sup>107</sup> *Arthaśāstra* 1.11.13–20; 2.35.13; etc.

<sup>108</sup> Elwin, *op. cit.* (n. 45 above), p. 481; Dinesh Chandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1911), pp. 242–43; *Padma Purāṇ* of Bijay Gupta, ed. B. K. Bhattacharya and Barisal, p. 226, cited by Pradyot Kumar Maity, *Historical Studies in the Cult of the Goddess Manasā* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1966), p. 189; P. Thomas, *Kama Kalpa: The Hindu Ritual of Love* (11th ed.; Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala, 1959), p. 118; W. J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic* (2d ed.; London: Thacker and Spink, 1882), p. 273; Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>109</sup> Maganlal A. Buch, *The Principles of Hindu Ethics* (Baroda, 1921), p. 3.

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she said, "Men should go to their wives." This injunction was elaborated by the time of the Epic in the form of the *ṛtugamana*, the duty of a man to make love to his wife during her fertile period.<sup>110</sup> By ignoring the fertile period, a man commits a sin which leads him to Hell;<sup>111</sup> it is the ancestors' request for descendants which causes Agastya to seek the hand of Lopāmudrā. To this day, it is believed in India that a man who dies childless will become a ghost,<sup>112</sup> for a son is responsible for the ceremonies upon which the peace of his dead ancestors depends.

The basic obligation to the manes is cited by Śiva as an excuse for him *not* to beget a son, as he is immortal and has no ancestors,<sup>113</sup> but this is one of many instances in which the god willingly submits to the mortal situation. The *Śiva Purāṇa* says, "The man without a son has an empty house, and his *tapas* is cut off,"<sup>114</sup> thus denying to the ascetic both the pleasures which he has voluntarily abandoned and the very goal for which he has sacrificed them. This may seem merely spiteful, but its application in several myths reveals the logic of it in Indian terms:

The sage Mandapāla followed the path of the sages who have drawn up their seed in chastity; he practised *tapas*, conquered his senses, and finally abandoned his body and went to the world of the manes. But there he did not receive the fruits of his *tapas*, and he saw many people without rewards there, though they had mastered asceticism. He asked the reason for this and was told, "Men win these fruits by performing the rituals, mastering *brahmacarya*, and begetting progeny. If a man has mastered *tapas* and performed the rituals, but has no children, he does not obtain the reward; but beget children and you will enjoy the eternal fruits." Upon hearing this, Mandapāla, knowing the fecundity of birds, immediately went and begat four sons upon a bird-woman, Jaritā. Then he abandoned them and took another wife, Lapitā, on whom he begat many sons. In time he returned to Jaritā, and, though both wives were jealous, he lived with them and with his many sons.<sup>115</sup>

In this myth, chastity is not in itself considered bad, but merely insufficient; the ascetic takes pains to remedy the deficiency and reaps the promised reward in the end, though he experiences many of the problems typical of the attempt to combine the ascetic life with marriage—quarrels with his wife and the loss of his sons. Similar stories are told of other sages;<sup>116</sup> the ascetic Prajāpati

<sup>110</sup> *Mānavadharmasāstra*, ed. Julius Jolly (London: Trübner, 1887), 3.46–48.

<sup>111</sup> *Mārkaṇḍeya* 14.4.

<sup>112</sup> William Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (2d ed.; 2 vols.; London, Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1896), II, 22.

<sup>113</sup> *Brhaddharma* 2.60.10–15.

|| See Section H 2 (Part II).

<sup>114</sup> *Śiva* 3.14.32.

<sup>115</sup> MHB I.220.5–17; .224.1–32.

<sup>116</sup> *Devibhāgavata* 1.1.4 ff.; *Brahma* 34.62–73; MHB I.41.1–30; I.42.1–20.

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(primeval creator) named Ruci was begged by his ancestors to marry, but he preferred detachment and retirement from worldly actions. Convinced at length, he did *tapas*, obtained an *apsaras* for his wife, and begat a son upon her.<sup>117</sup> Even though Ruci agrees to marry, he obtains his wife by the very method that endangered his ancestors—by the practice of *tapas*—and his wife is the traditional partner of those ascetics who for any reason break their vow of chastity: she is an *apsaras*. Thus Ruci manages to satisfy both traditions somewhat, to beget a son and still remain an ascetic.

### 9. THE PRAJĀPATI AND HIS ASCETIC SONS

An important series of myths dealing with primeval creation rejects *tapas* as a creative method, but even in this context, the one who makes creation ultimately possible is Śiva, the lord of ascetics, who usually appears in his anti-ascetic, androgynous form, even though his appearance is a reward for Prajāpati's *tapas*:

Brahmā created many creatures; when they failed to increase and Brahmā began to worry, a voice said, "You must create by means of sexual intercourse." But as Śiva had not yet created the race of women, this was not possible. Then Brahmā performed *tapas*, and Śiva came to him in his androgynous form; the woman then became separate and gave Brahmā a *śakti* [female creative power]. She herself re-entered Śiva's body and disappeared; Brahmā was very happy, and creation proceeded by intercourse.<sup>118</sup>

In another version of this myth, the woman is considered to be Brahmā's daughter, with whom he commits incest, and the man is not Śiva but Kāma. The pattern of the myth allows for the assistance of either the great yogi (who here appears in his sexual aspect) or the great god of desire (to assist Brahmā who in this case is himself considered the great yogi) in order to strike the balance of creative forces:

Once when Brahmā wished to create he brought forth sons mentally. He told them to perform creation, but they disregarded their father's commands and went to do *tapas*. Then in anger Brahmā, the great yogi, created the eleven Rudras [forms of Śiva] and more sons, and then he created a son, Kāma, and a beautiful daughter, sixteen years old. Brahmā said to Kāma, "I have made you for the sake of the pleasure of a man and a woman. Invade the hearts of all creatures by means of yoga, and you will delude and madden them always." Having given magic arrows to Kāma, Brahmā looked at his daughter to give her a boon, but at this moment Kāma

<sup>117</sup> *Mārkaṇḍeya* 92.1–26; 93.1–48; 94.1–38; 95.1–7.

<sup>118</sup> *Śiva* 3.3.1–29; *Śiva*, *Vāyaviyasaṃhitā* 7.15.–7.17; *Vāyu* 1.9.61–86; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (Gorakhpur: Gītā Press, 1962), 1.7.1–19; *Padma* 5.3.155–72; *Mārkaṇḍeya* 47.1–17; cf. Dessigane, *Les Legendes*, #63, pp. 82–83.

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decided to test his weapons, and he pierced the great yogi with his arrows and incantations, so that Brahmā fell in a faint. When he regained consciousness and saw his daughter before him, Brahmā was determined to enjoy her, and he began to pursue her. She sought refuge with her brothers, the ascetics, who spoke angrily to their father, saying, "What is this disgusting act that you are bent upon, wishing to enjoy your own daughter?" Then Brahmā was so ashamed that he abandoned his body by means of yoga, and the girl, seeing her father dead, wept and killed herself as he had. But Viṣṇu then appeared and revived them both, giving the girl in marriage to Kāma, to become Rati, goddess of sexual pleasure.<sup>119</sup>

In this version, the "Rati" which was merely an activity in the earlier version is personified as a goddess, the wife of Kāma, just as Kāma himself appears in place of generalized sexual intercourse. Brahmā dies and is revived by Viṣṇu, a pattern typical of creator gods; in other versions of this story it is Śiva who revives him,<sup>120</sup> but here Śiva's place is taken by Viṣṇu because Śiva himself is represented both by "the great yogi" (Brahmā) who is shot by Kāma (as Śiva is shot later in the myth) and by the ascetic sons who revile Brahmā for his act of incest as Śiva usually does.##

In another version of this creation myth, which incorporates the first story, Śiva appears more explicitly in a double capacity of yogi and erotic god:

Brahmā began creation by meditation, but darkness and delusion overcame him. His mindborn sons were all yogis, passionless, devoted to Śiva, but they did not want to create. So Brahmā did *tapas* in order to create, but he did not succeed. . . . He begged Śiva to help him in the work of creation. Śiva agreed, but the creatures that he made were immortals like himself, and they filled the universe. Brahmā said, "Do not create this sort of creatures, but make them subject to death." Śiva said, "I will not do that; create such mortals yourself, if you wish." Then Śiva turned away from creation and remained with his seed drawn up in chastity from that day forth.

Brahmā then wished to create by means of sexual intercourse; he did *tapas* for Śiva, who appeared in his androgynous form and gave Brahmā the *śakti*.

Brahmā then began the process of creation by intercourse. He divided himself into a man and a woman; the woman was Śatarūpā and the man was Manu. Śatarūpā did *tapas* and obtained Manu for her husband. Together they begat the race of mortals.<sup>121</sup>

Most of the creative themes are here: The yogi Śiva appears as the object of the *tapas* of the sages and of Brahmā and as the god who refuses to create, maintaining his chastity; but as the erotic god, Śiva neglects to reward the ascetic sons, and he himself appears as the androgyne and produces creatures who fill the

<sup>119</sup> *Brahmavaivarta* 4.35.31-73, -101-02.

<sup>120</sup> *Vāyu* 1.25.6 ff.; *Līṅga* 1.22.17 ff.; *Kūrma* 1.10.17-39.

## See Section F 1 (Part II).

<sup>121</sup> *Śiva* 7.1.12.1-2, -19-22, -44-47; 7.1.14.14-21; 7.1.17.1-5 ff.



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universe. Creative methods alternate similarly, intercourse replacing *tapas* and being replaced in turn; the final creation is by a combination of the methods: Śatarūpā first uses *tapas* to obtain her husband and then procreates sexually with him.

### 10. THE TWO FORMS OF IMMORTALITY

Throughout the mythology, whether or not *tapas* is accepted as a valid means of creation, it is practiced for another goal: immortality, freedom from rebirth. In the Vedas, *tapas* is able to accomplish the chief desideratum, fertility; in the Upaniṣads, *tapas* is the means to the new goal, release (*mokṣa* or *mukti*). Both are forms of immortality, both promising continuation of the soul without the body—*mokṣa* giving complete freedom of the soul (or absorption into the Godhead), progeny giving a continuation of the soul's life in the bodies of one's children. Thus from the earliest times there was a choice set before the worshiper; even in the hymn of Agastya and Lopāmudrā, the poet speaks of the goal which is won by both paths, and the Purāṇic myths may be read as an attempt to reap the rewards of both worlds in this way.

One passage in Āpastamba praises chastity as the way to immortality,<sup>122</sup> but another states, "You create progeny and that's your immortality, O mortal."<sup>123</sup> If one cannot have it both ways, one can at least succeed by the path particularly suited to the individual; the poet Bhartṛhari expressed this view:

In this vain fleeting universe, a man  
Of wisdom has two courses: first, he can  
Direct his time to pray, to save his soul,  
And wallow in religion's nectar bowl.  
But, if he cannot, it is surely best  
To touch and hold a lovely woman's breast,  
And to caress her warm round hips, and thighs,  
And to possess that which between them lies.<sup>124</sup>

The choice is not always so free; one is limited by natural propensities and *svadharma*, the individual's particular place in Hindu society. The god Indra was once enlightened by Śiva and left his wife in order to devote himself to *tapas*; his wife, Śaci, at length persuaded him to return to her and to rule his kingdom, in order to fulfil his own role, his *svadharma* as king of the gods.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Āpastamba 2.9.23.4.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.9.24.1.

<sup>124</sup> Bhartṛhari #88, trans. Brough, *op. cit.* (n. 90 above), #167; cf. Bhartṛhari #135.

<sup>125</sup> *Brahmavaivarta* 4.47.152–60.

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In discussing this myth, Heinrich Zimmer wrote of "the re-establishment of a balance. . . . We are also taught to esteem the transient sphere of the duties and pleasures of individual existence, which is as real and vital to the living man as a dream to the sleeping soul."<sup>126</sup> It is the function of Indra—and of Śiva—to maintain this balance, to defend the fulness of life against the negation of metaphysical emptiness.

In the myths, this balance is expressed, not in a static form, but in a constantly shifting adjustment, mingling elements of the ascetic and conventional traditions in ever narrowing contrasts, approaching but never quite reaching a solution. The *Śiva Purāṇa* sums up in metaphorical terms the resolution of the two paths and the two goals, the yogic fire and the elixir of love: "He who burns his body with the fire of Śiva and floods it with the elixir of his *śakti* by the path of yoga—he gains immortality."<sup>127</sup>

### C. ASCETICISM AND FERTILITY IN THE CLASSICAL HINDU SOCIAL SYSTEM

The tension which is manifested in metaphysical terms as the conflict between the two paths to immortality, between *mokṣa* and the *dharma* of conventional society (in particular, the *dharma* of marriage and procreation), appears in social terms as the tension between the different stages (*āśrama*-s) of Hindu life. These four stages provide a superficial solution in temporal terms: first one should be a *brahmacārīn* (chaste student); then *gṛhastha* (married householder); then *vānaprastha* (the man who dwells in the forest with or without his wife); and finally the *sannyāsīn* (the ascetic who has renounced everything). There is little disagreement about the value of the first stage, for it does not preclude any of the others; the peculiar nature of the third stage will be discussed below.\*\*\* The basic conflict remains between the second and fourth stages, the householder and the ascetic, who represent the two basic paths.

#### 1. THE ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE THE HOUSEHOLDER AND THE ASCETIC

In praising the ascetic life, the Upaniṣads condemn the values of the householder: One must overcome the desire for sons and live as a mendicant.<sup>128</sup> This is the ascetic "party line," a direct contra-

<sup>126</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* (Bollingen Series #6; New York: Pantheon, 1946), p. 22.

<sup>127</sup> *Śiva* 7.1.28.19.

\*\*\* See below, Section C 2; also see Section H 1 (Part II).

<sup>128</sup> *Bṛhadaranyaka Upaniṣad* 3.5 and 4.4.22.

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diction of the conventional religious view represented by such stories as the *Mahābhārata* tale of Sudarśana, who became a householder, thinking, "As a householder I will conquer death."<sup>129</sup> According to the lawbooks, which represent primarily the conventional ethics, a man has three debts to pay: He owes sacrifice to the gods, children to his ancestors, and the study of the Vedas to the holy sages; if he does not pay these debts and seeks Release instead, he is condemned to Hell.<sup>130</sup>

The mainstream of Hinduism attempted to reassure the members of each group that by fulfilling the *dharma* of that group—necessary for the survival of the system as a whole—they would still be able to reap the rewards of other groups as well. The jurists incorporated the ascetic "heresy" and added its goals to those of the conventional life. The Epics state that a married man may comply perfectly with the laws of chastity by abstaining from intercourse with his wife except during her fertile season; by this he gains the merits of a true *brahmacārin*.<sup>131</sup> A similar equation appears in another lawbook: "The begetting of a son by the husband is [equivalent to] the experience of the forest-dweller stage."<sup>132</sup> In this way, the values of asceticism were absorbed into conventional society.

At the other end of the spectrum, the yogi could extend his worldly involvement almost limitlessly without renouncing any aspect of the ascetic life. The self-controlled yogi may even be a householder and still attain Release if he remains unattached to household affairs;<sup>133</sup> the intention is all-important in this context. Thus Brahmā says to the Pine Forest sages, "You live in a hermitage but you are overcome by anger and lust; yet the true hermitage of a wise man is his home, while for the man who is not a true yogi even the hermitage is merely a house."<sup>134</sup> And this is the philosophy behind much of the Tantric sexuality of the later Purāṇas: one may perform the *act* of sexual intercourse without losing one's purity, as long as the *mind* remains uninvolved.†††

Thus the two kinds of thought may meet on either side of the line—the householder may embrace the philosophy and even the

<sup>129</sup> MHB XIII.2.39–40.

<sup>130</sup> *Vāsiṣṭhadharmaśāstra*, ed. Alois Anton Führer (Bombay: Bombay Sanskrit Series #23, 1883), 11.48; Manu 4.257, 6.33–37; cf. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 6.3.10.5 and *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.7.2.1–6.

<sup>131</sup> MHB XII.214.10; III.199.12; cf. *Rāmāyaṇa* I.8.9.

<sup>132</sup> *Smṛtyarthaśāra*, p. 2, v. 17, cited by Kane, *op. cit.* (n. 93 above), II, 929.

<sup>133</sup> *Śiva Saṃhitā*, last 3 verses; cited by Briggs, *op. cit.* (n. 63 above), p. 49.

<sup>134</sup> *Vāmana* 43.87.

††† See below, Section D 3.

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chastity of the ascetic, or the ascetic may go so far as to take a wife and become a householder.<sup>135</sup> The same text which teaches a man that he must overcome the desire for sons and become a sage goes on to say that before attaining final Release he must also overcome the desire to be a sage.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, one must absorb the wisdom of both desires; the ideal for Hinduism in general was a fully integrated life in which all aspects of human nature could be of value.<sup>137</sup>

### 2. THE FOREST-DWELLER: AN INADEQUATE COMPROMISE

The third stage, that of the forest-dweller, is the most complex, for it is here that the two traditions meet, in the married ascetic. The main factor distinguishing the forest-dweller from the *sannyāsin* was that the former was allowed to have a wife; to counteract this, the forest-dwellers were said to practice a more violent kind of *tapas*, where the *sannyāsin*-s could, if they wished, merely practice restraint.<sup>138</sup> Yet even here there is some confusion, for some lawbooks grant the forest-dweller the alternative of leaving his wife to the care of his sons.<sup>139</sup> The textbooks are unanimous, however, in their belief that it was *better* to go into the forest without a wife.<sup>140</sup> Even if the sage does take his wife with him, he is advised to avoid her as much as possible, or, in the words of the Abbé Dubois, "to use the privileges of marriage with the greatest moderation."<sup>141</sup> Several lawbooks state that the forest-dweller should live in complete continence, with his seed drawn up;<sup>142</sup> if he has intercourse with his wife, due to his desire, his vow is ruined and he must perform expiation.<sup>143</sup> The jurist Kullūka allowed the forest-dweller to go to his wife "at the prescribed times," that is, during her fertile period;<sup>144</sup> this is a dispensation similar to that allowed to the householder.

This is a delicate compromise, and one which the mythology

<sup>135</sup> Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>136</sup> *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 3.5.

<sup>137</sup> Jan Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens. I: Veda und älterer Hinduismus* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1963), p. 288.

<sup>138</sup> Kane, *op. cit.*, II, 928-29.

<sup>139</sup> Manu 6.2-3; *Kūrma* 2.27.1-17; *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram*, ed. by W. Caland (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927), 9.5; cf. Kane, *op. cit.*, II, 918.

<sup>140</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, "Lakulīṣa," pp. 189-190; Guṇaratna's commentary on Haribhadra's *Śaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, cited by Surendranath Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy: V: Southern Schools of Śaivism* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 144.

<sup>141</sup> Dubois, *op. cit.*, pp. 505 and 508.

<sup>142</sup> *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (Poona: Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series #46, 1904), 3.44; *Vāsiṣṭha* 9.5; Manu 6.26; *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram* 9.2-5.

<sup>143</sup> *Kūrma* 2.27.16-17.

<sup>144</sup> Cited by Kane, *op. cit.*, II, 920.

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never accepted. Physical chastity can be regulated, but in this realm it is the elusive chastity of the mind that is put to the test. A famous and typical story illustrating this problem is the tale of Jamadagni :

The ascetic Jamadagni did *tapas* for many years; then, by the gods' command, he went to the king and asked for the hand of the princess Reṇukā in marriage. Having obtained her, he went back to his hermitage with her and they performed *tapas* together for many years, during which five sons were born to them. One day when the sons were out gathering fruit, Reṇukā went to bathe, and in the river she saw a king sporting with his wife. Then Reṇukā was overcome with desire for him, and because of that transgression she fainted. She recovered and returned to the hermitage, but as soon as her husband saw her, devoid of her holy luster, he knew that she had lost her virtue. He was furious, and when he had reviled her he asked each of his sons in turn to kill her; the first four refused, but the youngest, Rāma, took an axe and killed his mother, for which his father praised him highly, offering him a boon. Rāma asked that his mother be revived, and this was granted.<sup>145</sup>

The sin, committed in mind alone, is so slight in proportion to the punishment that, setting aside the possibility that this may be a somewhat Bowdlerized account of Reṇukā's transgression (an unlikely possibility in the light of the Epic's general disinclination to mince words), it seems necessary to seek the true fault in the situation itself; not only in the troublesome presence of the wife, but in the sons as well, whose birth to ascetics is a constant problem in the mythology.

The situation of the married ascetic is one of compromise, and this is never the Hindu way of resolution, which proceeds by a series of oppositions—for example, the yogi and the married man—rather than by one entity which combines the two by sacrificing the essence of each. Hinduism has no "golden mean"; it seeks the exhaustion of two golden extremes, rather than the arbitration of a middle ground. The yogi in myth is very closely bound up with normal existence,<sup>146</sup> but at the same time entirely divorced from it; this made sense to the Hindu in a way that the forest-dweller compromise never did. As a metaphorical mediation, the third stage remained valuable, and so it is the focal point of most of the yogi-householder stories; but as a way of life it was rejected,<sup>147</sup> even forbidden.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> MHB III.116.1–18.

<sup>146</sup> Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

<sup>147</sup> Louis Dumont, "World Renunciation in Indian Religion," in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, IV (April, 1960), p. 45.

<sup>148</sup> Kane, *op. cit.*, II, 928–29.

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### D. SUBLIMATION AND THE TRANTRAS

On the human level, as well as the divine, one solution to the conflict between sexual and ascetic behavior was to equate them completely, playing upon the basic function of power which they do in fact share, qualifying sexual activity in such a way as to make it entirely yogic in its application. This solution underlies the Tantric theory of sublimation, by which desire itself, subjected to ascetic discipline, is used to conquer desire. The conventional ascetic viewpoint opposes the method of sublimation; desire must be conquered by chastity, by firmness, by resistance to temptation; as Śiva himself explains, "The desire for desires is increased rather than assuaged by the enjoyment of them, just as a dark flame is increased by oblations poured upon it."<sup>149</sup> But desire may also be channeled and controlled, not by undisciplined license, but by careful application of sexual stimuli; this is the basis of Tantrism, the influence of which is strong in the later strata of Śaiva mythology.

#### 1. SEXUAL SATIETY: THE "LIŅGA" IN THE "YONI"

When Kāma has aroused Śiva by shooting him with the arrow of Fascination, Śiva resolves to marry Pārvatī in order to cure himself of the disease born of desire;<sup>150</sup> he says, "I burn day and night because of Kāma; I will find no peace [*śanti*] without Pārvatī."<sup>151</sup> The particular symbolism which expresses this cure is that of the *liṅga* and the *yoni* (the female sexual organ); although in the myths the origin of *liṅga* worship is sometimes ascribed to a curse, it is more frequently the result of measures taken to cure Śiva of his destructive sexual fever. When the Pine Forest sages castrate Śiva, his fiery *liṅga* moves throughout the earth and the underworld and heaven, burning everything before it like a fire, troubling the universe until the sages propitiate Śiva and Pārvatī agrees to receive the *liṅga* in her *yoni* form.<sup>152</sup> The solution to Śiva's dangerous sexuality is not to impose chastity upon him—as the sages attempt to do, and fail, merely exacerbating the danger—but to satisfy him; in certain extreme situations, the only possible control of desire is release. Lust remains a threat to religion only until it is answered; the Goddess says to Śiva, "My lord, having made love with you for many years, I am satisfied,

<sup>149</sup> *Liṅga* 1.86.23.

<sup>150</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa* 4.30.84.

<sup>151</sup> *Mahābhāgavata* 24.33.

<sup>152</sup> Nilakaṇṭha on MHB XIII.14.228–31 (Bombay); *Śiva* 4.12.17–52.

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and your mind has withdrawn from these pleasures. I wish to know your true nature, that frees one from rebirth.”<sup>153</sup>

### 2. YOGA AND “BHOGA”

The terms yoga and *bhoga* (sexual enjoyment), representing the extremes of the two paths, appear often in Tantric texts :

If a man is a yogi he does not enjoy [sensual pleasures]; while one who enjoys them does not know yoga. That is why the Kaula [Śaiva Tantric] doctrine, containing the essence of *bhoga* and yoga, is superior to all [other doctrines].<sup>154</sup>

The Tantra goes on to explain this central doctrine : “In the Kaula doctrine, *bhoga* turns into yoga directly ; what is sin [in conventional religion] becomes meritorious ; *saṃsāra* [worldly life] turns into *mokṣa*.”<sup>155</sup> To a certain extent, this is a simple conjunction of opposites, enhanced by a felicitous assonance (*bhoga*-yoga, *bhokṣa*-*mokṣa*)—the sort of proposition which is not uncommon in the crude system of the Tantras ; but it contains the seed of metaphysical as well as psychological truth, and this is developed in the mythology.

The application of this doctrine to Śiva, the greatest of yogis and the greatest of *bhogin*-s (i.e., those who indulge in sexual enjoyment) is obvious. Śiva is the narrator of most of the Tantras, explaining them to Pārvatī, and he himself is usually regarded as the author of their doctrine.<sup>156</sup> Bhairavānanda, a Śaiva yogi who appears in a play by Rājaśekhara, sings this verse :

Gods Vishnu and Brahm and the others may preach  
Of salvation by trance, holy rites and the Vedies.  
'Twas Umā's [Pārvatī's] fond lover alone that could teach  
Us salvation plus brandy plus fun with the ladies.<sup>157</sup>

As propounder of this doctrine, Śiva is also the greatest of its examples. Brahmā cites this in criticism of Śiva when Śiva has censured him for his attempted incest ; Brahmā says that Śiva considers himself to be a wise yogi and a *bhogin* with conquered senses.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>153</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.23.7-8.

<sup>154</sup> *Kūlārṇava Tantra*, ed. Tārānātha Vidyāratha (Tantric Texts, #5, ed. Arthur Avalon ; Calcutta and London : Luzac, 1917), II.23 ; cf. Dumont, “World Renunciation,” p. 53.

<sup>155</sup> *Kūlārṇava Tantra* II.24 ; cf. *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* of Svātmarāmayogīndra, (Bombay : Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1815), 3.94.

<sup>156</sup> Anand, *op. cit.*, p. 40, citing Arthur Avalon.

<sup>157</sup> *Karpūramañjarī* of Rākaśekhara, ed. Sten Konow, with a trans. by Charles Lanman (Cambridge : Harvard Oriental Series #4, 1901), I.22-24 ; Lanman translation p. 235.

<sup>158</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.10.25.

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### 3. TEMPTATION AND INDIFFERENCE

It is significant that Śiva, even when a *bhōgin*, has “conquered senses”; this distinguishes him from the mere libertine and justifies his achievement of perfection. *Controlled* release, not complete license, is the Hindu solution to the problem of lust. When this is attained, then the devotee who indulges in sexual pleasures is saved rather than damned by them: “He who thirsts for pleasure in order to enjoy it becomes addicted to desire [*kāmin*]. But the sage who partakes of sensual pleasures as they happen, with a detached mind, without desire, he becomes free of desire [*akāmin*].”<sup>159</sup> This is the justification which Śiva uses frequently in the Purāṇas to retain his status as a yogi while participating in sexual experiences urged upon him by the gods: he does it, but he does not enjoy it. Physical involvement without emotional involvement makes him even a greater yogi than he would be if he merely remained forever in his meditation. For this reason, Śiva is said to have conquered Kāma, not in spite of the fact that Kāma first stirred his senses greatly, but *because* he was greatly aroused.††† By conquering his incipient desire<sup>160</sup>—that is, by burning up *his* Kāma—he shows his control.

This kind of self-temptation underlies the episode in which Śiva allows Himālaya to bring Pārvatī to him when he is performing *tapas*; Śiva receives her, not because he is a false ascetic, but because he is so great an ascetic that he is in no danger from women, or so he thinks.

Because of his respect for Himālaya, Śiva accepted his daughter, even though he realized that her beauty was a source of great passion, an obstacle to anyone meditating upon *tapas*. For this is even greater firmness, to be able to remain firm when there is an obstacle; the *tapas* that is done in a place without obstacles is greatly increased when done in a place with obstacles. . . . Śiva received her even though she was an obstacle to his meditation, for those whose minds are not disturbed even when temptation is near—they are truly firm.<sup>161</sup>

Thus Pārvatī taunts him to prove his invulnerability by exposing himself to her temptation, saying that if he is truly beyond the power of women, he will have nothing to fear from her presence.<sup>162</sup> Similarly, Gorakh Nāth sent Pūran to beg alms from the beautiful

<sup>159</sup> Gopāla Uttara Tāpinī Upaniṣad, 15; in *Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣads*, with the commentary of Śrī Upaniṣad Brahma-yogin, ed. Pandit A. Mahadeva Sastri (Adyar Library Series #8; 2d. ed.; Adyar Library, 1953).

††† See Section G 2–4 (Part II).

<sup>160</sup> Śiva 2.3.18.45.

<sup>161</sup> *Kālikā* 43.35–40; *Kumārasambhava* 1.56.

<sup>162</sup> Śiva 2.3.13.21.



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Queen, and even to be her slave for four hours, as the test of a true ascetic.<sup>163</sup>

The importance of this kind of temptation has been noted by Edward C. Dimock in the Sāhajiyā sect of Bengal:

It is necessary to transform desire into true love, or *prema*, before ritual union can be effective. And the Sāhajiyās consider that chastity, especially under extreme temptation, has the power to transform desire into love. . . . Desire, called *kāma*, is dangerous only when it is considered as the end. The truth is that *kāma* is the beginning.<sup>164</sup>

In physiological terms, the "extreme temptation" is the erotic stimulus that stirs the seed so that it can rise through the spinal cord to the brain.<sup>165</sup> The initial impulse to chastity, which is always visualized as an active state, a method, is a sexual impulse.

### 4. THE RETENTION OF THE SEED

Eventually, the Tantras refined this doctrine to allow the man who had conquered his desires to perform the sexual act itself, merely retaining his seed to demonstrate the complete control of his senses; this is an extreme variation upon the theme of temptation. The upward motion of the seed—as in the figure of the ithyphallic yogi—represents the channeling of the life forces themselves:

The method of the Guru at this stage is to use the forces of Pravritti (active sexuality) in such a way as to render them self-destructive. The passions which bind (notably the fundamental instincts for food, drink, and sexual satisfaction) may be it is said so employed as to act as forces whereby the particular life, of which they are the strongest physical manifestation, is raised to the universal life. Passion which has hitherto run downwards and outwards (often to waste) is directed inwards and upwards and transformed to power.<sup>166</sup>

In order for this ritual to be effective, it was essential that the yogi restrain his seed, for, as Mircea Eliade remarks, "Otherwise the yogin falls under the law of time and death, like any common libertine."<sup>167</sup> In Tantric terms, this is what distinguishes the false

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *Narottamavilāsa* of Narahari-dāsa, ed. Rāmanārāyaṇa Vidyāratna (Murshidabad, Berhampur: Rādhārāman Press, 1918), pp. 200–01; trans. by Dimock, *op. cit.* (n. 63 above), p. 156; and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Gorakhpur: Gītā Press, 1962), 6.5.41.

<sup>164</sup> Dimock, *op. cit.*, pp. 53, 155, 16 and 157.

<sup>165</sup> P. H. Pott, *Yoga and Yantra: Their Interrelationship and their Significance for Indian Archeology*, trans. Rodney Needham (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 8; *Brhadaranyaka Upaniṣad* 6.4.5; *Yü-fang chih-yao* I b, trans. Henri Maspero, in "Les Procédés de 'nourrir le principe vital' dans la religion taoïste ancienne," *Journal Asiatique*, CCXXVII (1937), p. 385.

<sup>166</sup> Sir John George Woodroffe [Arthur Avalon], *Śakti and Śākta: Essays and Addresses on the Śākta Tantraśāstras* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1959), p. 151.

<sup>167</sup> Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 267–68.

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ascetic ("any common libertine") from the true yogi, as Śiva insists that he is distinguished from the other targets of Kāma.<sup>168</sup> The seed must be rechanneled, not held motionless; this is in keeping with the mythological concept of power which cannot be destroyed but must be set in motion in a safe direction. Other texts substantiate this idea with descriptions of the control of the seed after it has actually been emitted.<sup>169</sup> In the mythology, this takes the form of numerous incidents in which the seed of the yogi is swallowed, or cast into a sacrificial fire, or disposed of in other unnatural ways, as, for example, Śiva's seed is swallowed by Pārvatī or Agni, or infused into the wives of the Seven Sages.<sup>170</sup>

One interesting result of the technique of *coitus reservatus* is that the yogi is able thus to combine the alternating phases of sexuality and chastity just as Śiva does in his symbolic aspects, restoring his spent powers even as he spends them. §§§ Śiva himself is noted for his ability not only to draw up his seed in chastity but to draw it up in sexuality as well, to make love to Pārvatī for many years without shedding his seed.<sup>171</sup> Eliade has seen in the technique of seminal retention the attempt to recover the primordial powers that men had before the Light was dominated by Sexuality; by defeating the biological purposes of the sexual act, one ceases to act in instinctual blindness like other animals.<sup>172</sup> The conquest of the biological purpose of the act corresponds to the yogi's conquest of the emotional purpose of the act—that is, desire.

In the mythology of Śiva, the restraint of the seed serves a double purpose; on the one hand, it makes possible the birth of the son needed by the gods, a son who must *not* be born in Pārvatī (because the combination of her great powers with those of Śiva

<sup>168</sup> Śiva 7.1.24.43–45.

<sup>169</sup> *Dyānabindu Upaniṣad* 84–86; *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 6.4.10; *Gorakṣa Saivānta* 70–71, cited by Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 298, 333–34; *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* 3.82–96; commentary on Kanha, cited by Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 254; Surajit Sinha, "A note on the concept of sexual union for spiritual quest among the Vaiṣṇava preachers in the Bhumi belt of Purulia and Singbhum," *Eastern Anthropologist* XIV #2 (1961), pp. 194–95.

<sup>170</sup> *Āitareya Brāhmaṇa* 13.9; *Brhaddevatā* 5.97; MHB XIII, Appendix 1 #5, 48–50; *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 9.196; *Kathāsaritsāgara* 3.6.81; *Kumārasambhava* 1.51, 10.54; *Brahmaṇḍa* 3.1.30–40; 4.30.99–100; *Brahmavaivarta* 3.8.19–35, –83–88; 3.9.1–26; *Matsya* 158.33; 159.1; *Padma* 6.12.25; *Līṅga* 1.15.17–19; *Saura* 61.64–70; 62.5–12; *Śiva* 2.4.2.46; *Śiva*, *Dharmasamhitā* 10.132–50; *Skanda* 1.2.29.117–18; 5.1.34.62–66; 6.246.19–20; *Vāmana* 54.45; *Vāyu* 2.4.21–39; Elwin, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

§§§ See Sections I and I 1 (Part II).

<sup>171</sup> MHB XIII.83.45–47; *Rāmāyaṇa* I.35.6–13; *Kumārasambhava* 8.8; *Brahmavaivarta* 3.1.22, –40; *Kālikā* 48.46–47; *Śiva* 2.4.1.24; 2.4.2.1; 2.5.22.41–42.

<sup>172</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Mephistopheles and the Androgyne: Studies in Religious Myth and Symbol* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), pp. 42–43.

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would produce a son of unbearable force),||| but who must be inspired, as it were, by Śiva's union with Pārvatī; that is, Śiva must make love to Pārvatī in order to stir the seed up, but he must not place it in her. By separating the functions of eroticism and fertility in this way, the technique of *coitus reservatus* also allows Śiva to maintain his ambivalent status of yogi and lover.<sup>173</sup>

Yet the emphasis on Śiva's restraint of the seed as a justification for his sexual involvement is too simple and cannot be made to bear the burden of the resolution. In the first place, Tantric methods are later than the ambiguous myths of Śiva; and, in the second place, perhaps the most important of all the aspects of Śiva, and one of the oldest, is his role as the giver of the seed, which derives from his early identification with Brahmā and Agni, as well as with Kāma himself. This aspect of the mythology of Śiva will be discussed in the course of the second half of this paper.

||| See Section I 2 (Part II).

<sup>173</sup> Agrawala, *op. cit.*, vi; Bharati, *op. cit.*, p. 296; Watts, *op. cit.*, p. 96.



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Asceticism and Sexuality in the Mythology of Śiva. Part II

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Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty

ASCETICISM AND  
SEXUALITY IN THE  
MYTHOLOGY OF  
ŚIVA

PART II

E. THE VEDIC ANTECEDENTS OF ŚIVA

Many of the characteristics which contribute to the apparently paradoxical nature of the Purāṇic Śiva may be traced back to individual characteristics of gods of the Vedic pantheon. Both Śiva and Brahmā derive their creative attributes from the Vedic figure of the Prajāpati, the primeval creator; from Indra, Śiva inherits his phallic and adulterous character; from Agni, the heat of asceticism and passion; and from Rudra he takes a very common epithet as well as certain dark qualities.

1. RUDRA, GOD OF DESTRUCTION

Although an overemphasis on the identity of Rudra and Śiva has led to certain misleading generalizations, there is nevertheless a strong relationship between them. Śiva's paradoxical nature in the Purāṇas is based in part upon the superficially ambiguous nature of Rudra as creator and destroyer, the god with a shining exterior and a dark interior,<sup>1</sup> god of the storm and of healing herbs. Pri-

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Arjmann, *Rudra: Untersuchungen zum altindischen Glauben und Kultus* (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1922), p. 10.

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marily, however, it is the destructive aspect of Rudra which is bequeathed to Śiva. In the Ṛg Veda, Rudra is invoked as a god of death: "Do not slaughter our father or our mother."<sup>2</sup> In later metaphysical developments, death becomes less personal, and Śiva destroys the universe by fire at the end of each eon, purifying it by sprinkling it with ashes.<sup>3</sup> This cosmic role appears in the later mythology as a kind of necrophilia attributed to Śiva, who frequents funeral grounds smeared with the ashes of corpses,<sup>4</sup> and even becomes incarnate in a corpse.<sup>5</sup> This significant aspect of Śiva, together with the name of Rudra which is given to Śiva throughout the Purāṇas, is derived almost entirely from the Vedic Rudra.

### 2. INDRA, PHALLIC GOD OF FERTILITY

But the other aspect of Śiva, the phallic god, the giver of seed, is not merely an arbitrary philosophical reversal of his destructive role. To a certain extent, his sexuality may be derived from his ancient connection with the ascetic cults and their sexual manifestations, but many of the myths of fertility and much of the phallic religion may be derived from Śiva's close connection with Indra, the Vedic king of the gods.<sup>6</sup>

One tie between Indra and Śiva is formed by the group of the Maruts or Rudras, storm gods. In the Ṛg Veda they are the companions of Indra. Later they are called Indra's brothers, and they are the sons of Rudra,<sup>7</sup> who, according to one myth, adopted them when Indra tried to kill them in fraternal jealousy.<sup>8</sup> The two gods share many characteristics: both are said to have three eyes<sup>9</sup> or a thousand eyes,<sup>10</sup> and for the same reason: "Once the *apsaras* Tilottamā was sent to seduce the demons Sunda and Upasunda

<sup>2</sup> Ṛg Veda I. 114.7; cf. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* of the Black Yajur Veda, with the commentary of Mādhava, ed. E. Roer and E. B. Cowell (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1860), 4.5.6.6.

<sup>3</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa* 2.27.107-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.22.53; *Śiva* 2.2.26.15 and 2.3.27.27.

<sup>5</sup> *Vāyu* 1.23.208-9.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Ruben, *Kṛṣṇa: Konkordanz und Kommentar der Motive seines Heldenlebens* ("Istanbuler Schriften No. 17" [Istanbul, 1944]), p. 103; Alain Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 107; Allan Dahlquist, *Megasthenes and Indian Religion* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962), pp. 140-41; Horace Hayman Wilson (trans.), *Rig Veda Saṃhitā* (London: Trübner, 1866), I, xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Anthony Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* (Encyclopedia of Indo-Aryan Research, ed. George Bühler, III, I, A [Strassburg: Trübner, 1897]), pp. 79-81.

<sup>8</sup> Śāyaṇa on Ṛg Veda I.114.6.

<sup>9</sup> *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* [*Bṛhat Saṃhitā*] of Varāha-mihira, ed. H. Kern (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, New Series, 1865), 58.42-43.

<sup>10</sup> For Rudra: *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* 9.1.1.6-7; for Indra, nn. 12 and 15 below.

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from their *tapas*. While she danced before them, Śiva and Indra wanted to see more of her, and for this purpose Śiva became four-faced and Indra thousand-eyed.”<sup>11</sup> In this, as in the myth of Brahmā and his daughter,\* the cause and purpose of the extra eyes is a sexual one.<sup>12</sup> Both Indra and Śiva here play the part of the seduced ascetic; both are fertility gods. Indra in the *Mahābhārata* is the god of the seed who dissuades King Uparicara from his *tapas* and teaches him to erect “Indra-poles,”<sup>13</sup> phallic emblems which are the antecedents of the Śiva-*liṅga*.

With these qualities goes a series of myths that are told about both gods. Like Śiva, Indra is known as an adulterer, famed for the seduction of Ahalyā, the wife of the sage Gautama,<sup>14</sup> a crime for which he is sexually mutilated<sup>15</sup> as Śiva is.<sup>16</sup> One version of the Pine Forest tale refers to the castration of Indra when describing the same fate as it befalls Śiva.<sup>17</sup> Indra is the traditional enemy of ascetics, as is Śiva himself on occasion. The *tapas* of the ascetic threatens the kingdom of Indra, who is himself weakened by his lack of chastity, and Indra seduces the sage’s wife or sends an *apsaras* or even his own wife or daughter to weaken the ascetic and turn him from his *tapas*,† just as Śiva uses his own sexual charms, or those of his wife, to dissuade the Pine Forest sages from their *tapas*.<sup>18</sup> Both gods are associated with anti-Brahmanical, heterodox acts, and each loses his right to a share of the sacrifice.<sup>19</sup> Indra once killed the Brahmin Namuci, and Namuci’s head pur-

<sup>11</sup> Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, *Mahābhārata* (hereafter *MHB*), ed. Vishnu S. Sukthankar *et al.* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933), I.203.15–26.

\* See below, Section F2.

<sup>12</sup> Indra: *Brahmavaivarta* 4.47.31–34; Śiva: *Skanda* 5.3.150.18, 6.153.2–27.

<sup>13</sup> *MHB* XII.214.16 and IX.8.21.

<sup>14</sup> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 3.3.4.18; *MHB* V.12.6, XII.329.4.1, XIII.41.12; *Rāmāyaṇa* I.47.15–32, I.48.1–10; Śiva, *Dharmasamhitā* 11.1–13.

<sup>15</sup> *Śatapatha* 12.7.1.10–12, 5.2.3.8; *Rāmāyaṇa* I.47.26–27, I.48.1–10; *MHB* XII.329.14.1; cf. *Rg Veda* VI.46.3 and VIII.19.32.

<sup>16</sup> Śiva, *Dharmasamhitā* 10.187–93; *Kūrma* 2.38.39–41; *Skanda* 6.1.48–52; *Yāgyavalkya Smṛiti* 26a; *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 10.71–76.

<sup>17</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa* 2.27.23.

† See Part I, Section B2.

<sup>18</sup> Indra sends Śaci against Nahuṣa: *MHB* V.15.2–25. He uses his daughter, Jayantī, against Śukra: *Matsya* 47.113–27, 47.170–213; *Padma* 5.13.257–313; *Vāyu* 2.35–6. Śiva uses his “wife” against the Pine Forest sages: *Kūrma* 2.38.9–12; *Saura* 69; Śiva, *Dharmasamhitā* 10.108–10; he uses her against the demon Jalandhara: *Padma* 6.3–19, 6.98–107; *Skanda* 2.4.14–22; *Saura* 37.1–32; Śiva 2.5.13–26.

<sup>19</sup> Indra: *Viṣṇu* 4.9.18; Rudra: *Bhāgavata* 4.2.18; Śiva 2.2.26.18. Indra: cf. *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa* with the commentary of Śāyaṇa (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1869–74), 14.11.28.

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sued him until he was purified of his sin,<sup>20</sup> just as Śiva, having be-headed Brahmā, was plagued by the skull of Brahmā until he established the vow of expiation.‡

The two gods often impersonate one another, Indra taking the repulsive form of a Śaiva heretic,<sup>21</sup> Śiva the handsome form of Indra himself.<sup>22</sup> Thus each god increases that quality—*tapas* or *kāma*—which already exists within him in subordination to the complementary force. The commentator on the epic remarks that Śiva may assume the epithet of Indra because there is no difference between them;<sup>23</sup> and Indra, trying to dissuade a householder from performing *tapas* for Śiva, says, “Śiva is no different from me.”<sup>24</sup> In this context, in this role, there is no difference; Indra and Śiva were not identified with each other because they happened to amass similar characteristics. Rather, from the time of the late Vedas, Rudra and Indra were *given* similar attributes (e.g., the Maruts) because they served an identical function.

### 3. AGNI, THE EROTIC FIRE

The ascetic Śiva of the Purāṇas frequently uses his *tapas* as a weapon against his enemies, particularly against Kāma. In the R̥g Veda most of the verses in which *tapas* is used as heat against enemies are hymns to Agni, the god of fire,<sup>25</sup> who blasts with his *tapas* those who are impious and who perform the ritual with an evil purpose,<sup>26</sup> just as Śiva burns the impious Pine Forest sages. The fiery power of *tapas* serves as a natural bridge between the two gods; and it is said, “All the various forms of fire are ascetics [*tapasvin-s*], all takers of vows, and all are known to be parts of Rudra himself.”<sup>27</sup>

But most of the Śaiva myths are derived from Agni personified not as the heat of *tapas* but as the opposite force, the heat of sexual desire. Many myths are based upon a combination of the

<sup>20</sup> *MHB* IX.42.28–36; cf. *MHB* V.9–14, XII.273.26–54; *Hālāsyamāhātmya* No. 1, p. 7; T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (2 vols.; Madras: Law Printing House, 1916), II, A, 295–309.

‡ See below, Section F3.

<sup>21</sup> *Bhāgavata* 4.19.12–20; Edward Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* (Encyclopedia of Indo-Aryan Research, III, I, B [Strassburg: Trübner, 1915]), p. 137; cf. *MHB* XIV.54.12–35.

<sup>22</sup> *MHB* XIII.14.88 ff.; Ruben, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>23</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha on *MHB* XIII.17.45 (Bombay); XIII.17.44 (Poona).

<sup>24</sup> *Śiva* 3.15.39.

<sup>25</sup> Chauncey Blair, *Heat in the R̥g Veda and Atharva Veda* (American Oriental Society Publication No. 45 [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961]), p. 83.

<sup>26</sup> R̥g Veda VIII.60.16 and 19, III.18.2, X.87.14 and 20, VII.1.7.

<sup>27</sup> *Līṅga* 1.6.4.



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two. Springing from the natural physiological analogy, the tie between Agni and *kāma* was supported in Hindu thinking by the identification of ritual heat, *tapas*, with sexual heat, *kāma*.<sup>28</sup> A hymn of the Atharva Veda invokes Agni to madden a man with love;<sup>29</sup> another text states, "Agni is the cause of sexual union. . . . When a man and woman become heated, the seed flows, and birth takes place."<sup>30</sup>

As a personified deity, Agni is an unscrupulous seducer of women and an adulterer, qualities which cause him to be identified with Rudra.<sup>31</sup> When Śiva destroys the triple city of the demons, his weapon is fire, one of his eight forms, and the burning of the demon women is described in erotic terms:

When Śiva burnt the triple city with his fiery arrow, the women were burnt as they made love with their lovers in close embraces. One woman left her lover but could go nowhere else, and she died in front of him. One lotus-eyed woman, weeping, cried, "Agni, I am another man's wife; you, who witness the virtue of the triple world, should not touch me. Go away, leaving this house and my husband who lies with me." . . . Some women were burnt as they ran from their husbands' embraces; others, asleep and intoxicated, exhausted after love-making, were half-burnt before they awoke and wandered about, stunned.<sup>32</sup>

Erotic death by fire is frequently associated with the suttee motif; the original "suttee" was Satī, who entered the fire when her husband, Śiva, was dishonored. When Satī, reborn as Pārvatī, was about to marry Śiva again, the women of Himālaya's city admired the bridegroom, who was the personification of death by fire: "They blamed their lovers and praised Śiva, saying, 'What use have we for our lovers, and our nights of love-making? We will not continue on the wheel of life, but we will enter the fire, and Śiva will be our husband.'" <sup>33</sup>

#### 4. AGNI AND THE PINE FOREST SAGES

Śiva is more explicitly related to the erotic, destructive fire in the myth of the Pine Forest, which can be traced directly to the story of Agni and the wives of the Seven Sages, a text which is the source of much of the myth of the birth of Kumāra as well.<sup>34</sup> A late Vedic

<sup>28</sup> Atharva Veda III.21.4; *Taittiriya Saṃhitā* 2.2.3.1.

<sup>29</sup> Atharva Veda VI.130.4.

<sup>30</sup> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 3.4.3.4–5 and 3.5.3.16.

<sup>31</sup> F. D. K. Bosch, "Het Linga-Heiligdom van Dinaja," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences No. LXIV, 1924), p. 249.

<sup>32</sup> *Matsya* 140.59–65; *Śiva* 2.5.10.37–38; cf. *Subhāṣitaratnaṣa* Nos. 49, 61, and 67.

<sup>33</sup> *Brahmavaivarta* 4.39.16–21.

<sup>34</sup> Bosch, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

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text says, "The waters were the wives of Varuṇa [god of the waters]. Agni desired them and united with them. His seed fell and became the earth, the sky, and the plants that are eaten by fire."<sup>35</sup> This statement foreshadows the role of fire and water in the Kumāra story (in which the seed of Śiva is placed first in Agni and then in the Ganges); another version of this story concludes: "Agni's seed fell and became gold,"<sup>36</sup> and the seed of Śiva, the source of Kumāra, is gold. §

All later versions describe the seduced women not as the wives of Varuṇa but as the wives of the Seven Sages:

Originally, the Kṛttikās [the Pleiades] were the wives of the Bears [or Stars, the constellation Ursa Major], for the Seven Sages were in former times called the Bears. They were, however, prevented from intercourse [with their husbands], for the latter, the Seven Sages, rise in the North, and they [the Kṛttikās] in the East. Now, it is a misfortune for one to be prevented from intercourse [with his wife]. . . . But in fact Agni is their mate, and it is with Agni that they have intercourse.<sup>37</sup>

No causal relationship seems to be suggested here between the Kṛttikās' separation from their husbands and their connection with Agni. In many of the later versions, however, it is clearly stated that they were abandoned by their husbands because of their impregnation by Agni (or Śiva),<sup>38</sup> and in one version they are cursed to become constellations for this reason.<sup>39</sup> Yet in the earliest full version of this story, in the *Mahābhārata*, they are given the *reward* of becoming constellations and dwelling forever in heaven as compensation for having been abandoned by their husbands:

Once when Agni saw the beautiful wives of the great sages sleeping in their hermitage, he was overcome by desire for them. But he reflected, "It is not proper for me to be thus full of lust for the chaste wives of the Brahmins, who are not in love with me." Then he entered the household fire so that he could touch them, as it were, with his flames, but after a long time his desire became still greater, and he went into the forest, resolved to abandon his corporeal form. Then Svāhā [the oblation], the daughter of Dakṣa, fell in love with him and watched him for a long time, seeking some weak point, but in vain. When she knew that he had gone into the forest, full of desire, the amorous goddess decided to take the forms of the wives of the Seven Sages and to seduce Agni; thus both of them would obtain their desire. Assuming the form of each of the wives in turn, she made love with Agni; she took his seed and threw it into a golden lake on the white mountain.

<sup>35</sup> *Taittiriya Samhitā* 5.5.4.1.

<sup>36</sup> *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.3.8.

§ See below, Section E5.

<sup>37</sup> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.1.2.4–5.

<sup>38</sup> *Śiva* 2.4.2.62–64; *Skanda* 1.2.29.122.

<sup>39</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.27.75.

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The seed generated a son, Kumāra; the sages' wives, who were abandoned by their husbands, came to Kumāra and begged him to let them dwell forever in heaven. By his grace, they became the constellation of the Kṛttikās, considered the mothers of Kumāra. Then Svāhā married Agni.<sup>40</sup>

The elemental Agni, as well as the anthropomorphic, is very much in evidence here. He comes to the sages' wives in the form of the household fire, and, when spurned, he withdraws his elemental form as Śiva does in the Pine Forest, causing darkness to spread throughout the universe.<sup>41</sup> Agni's wife, Svāhā, is merely the personification of the oblation, the natural partner of the sacrificial fire; and she is the daughter of Dakṣa, like Satī, who makes herself an oblation, a suttee. Later versions of the Pine Forest myth simply transfer from Agni to Śiva more and more of the attributes which they share, using the basic plot and characters to point new morals, maintaining even—or rather, especially—the ambiguous elements. Thus the (false?) ascetic (Agni-Śiva) desires the wives of the great sages (Pine Forest sages or Seven Sages) but conquers his own desire. He enters the forest to find them (or to avoid them), and they (or their impersonators) fall in love with him. The question of their actual seduction is unresolved, as in the myth of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. Upon this part of the myth the story of the castration of Śiva and the origin of *liṅga* worship was grafted. The second half of the myth—the miraculous birth of Kumāra from the golden seed placed in fire and water—was used as a sequel to the sacred wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī; and this part of the Agni myth is based in turn upon a much older tale, the Vedic myth of Prajāpati's incestuous seed.

### 5. THE GOLDEN SEED OF FIRE

In the Vedas, Brahmā the Prajāpati is called Hiranyagarbha, "he of the womb of gold," to denote his creative powers.<sup>42</sup> The cosmogonic myth then postulated a golden egg instead of a golden womb,<sup>43</sup> and this symbol was replaced in turn by the image of the god of the golden seed, an epithet of Agni and of Śiva.<sup>44</sup> By the time of the Epic, Śiva was also given the original Vedic epithet, "the golden womb,"<sup>45</sup> together with the golden seed.<sup>46</sup> The com-

<sup>40</sup> *MHB* III.213.41–52, III.214.1–17, III.219.1–15.

<sup>41</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa* 2.27.36–37; *Haracarita* 10.78; *Śiva*, *Dharmasamhitā* 10.195.

<sup>42</sup> *Rg Veda* X.121.1; *Atharva Veda* X.5.19; *Taittiriya Saṃhitā* 5.5.1.2; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.2.2.5.

<sup>43</sup> *Śatapatha* 11.1.6.1 and 6.1.1.10; *Manu* 1.8–9.

<sup>44</sup> *Amarakośa* (Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1896), 1.58.

<sup>45</sup> *MHB* I, Appendix 28, No. 1, l. 188, and *MHB* XII.291.12 and 17.

<sup>46</sup> *Liṅga* 1.20.80–86.

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mentary on this epithet of Śiva says, "First he created the waters, and released his seed in them, and that became the golden egg. In the form of Agni, he created the golden universal egg by shedding his seed."<sup>47</sup> As the passage implies, the golden egg was the earlier concept, and the golden seed was transferred from Agni to Śiva. But another text describes the situation in reverse, maintaining that when Agni bore Śiva's seed for 5,000 years (before the birth of Kumāra) his body became entirely golden, and so Agni became known as the bearer of the golden seed.<sup>48</sup> In fact, both Śiva and Agni derive this property from the Vedic Prajāpati.

### F. ŚIVA AND BRAHMĀ : OPPOSITION AND IDENTITY

Śiva has attracted to himself many of the roles and characteristics of Brahmā, the creator, the giver of seed. In many of the later creation myths, Śiva comes forth to help Brahmā, usually in the form of an androgyne,<sup>49</sup> but originally, Brahmā himself was the androgyne.<sup>50</sup> In many of the early creation myths, Brahmā's sons, devoted to the performance of *tapas* for Śiva refuse to participate in creation. || In a later reversal, Brahmā himself plays the part of the ascetic son, to be replaced in turn by Śiva, as the creative son : "Śiva commanded Brahmā to create, but Brahmā did not; he meditated upon Śiva for the sake of knowledge, and Śiva was pleased by Brahmā's *tapas* and gave him the Vedas. But Brahmā still could not create, and so he again performed *tapas*, and Śiva offered him a boon, and Brahmā asked Śiva to be his son."<sup>51</sup> And in a still later layer of the mythology, Brahmā again supplants the ascetic Rudra. # The balance shifts constantly between the two.

### 1. RUDRA VERSUS PRAJĀPATI

Although in several of the popular religious traditions of India Śiva is himself associated with the incest typical of a primeval creator,<sup>52</sup> in traditional Sanskrit literature he is famed primarily

<sup>47</sup> *MHB* XIII.17.40 (Bombay); XIII.17.39 (Poona).

<sup>48</sup> *Vāmāna* 57.9-10.

<sup>49</sup> *Vāyu* 1.9.68-70; *Līṅga* 1.70.324-27; *Viṣṇu* 1.7.12-13.

<sup>50</sup> *Śatapatha* 14.4.2; *Manu* 1.32; *Viṣṇu* 1.7.14.

|| See Part I, Section B9.

<sup>51</sup> *Skanda* 5.1.2.8-19.

# See below, Section F4.

<sup>52</sup> Verrier Elwin, *Tribal Myths of Orissa* (Oxford: Cumberlege, 1954), pp. 422-423; Verrier Elwin, *The Muria and their Ghotul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 257-58; Dahlquist, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Walter Ruben, *Eisenschmiede und Dämonen in Indien* (Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie, Vol. XXXVII, suppl. [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1939]), p. 213; Pradyot Kumar Maity, *Historical*

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as the chastiser of the incestuous Prajāpati. The Vedic incest myth does not mention Rudra, but commentators have identified him with the avenger in the original myth, and he is specifically active as such in the later versions. The incest myth supplies much of the imagery of the Kumāra birth story (in which Śiva himself takes over the role of Prajāpati) as well as the plot elements of the later addition to that story, the conflict between Śiva and Kāma (in which Śiva maintains his role as opponent of Prajāpati).\*\* Thus the Purāṇic tradition rearranges elements of the Vedic myth in such a manner that Śiva plays the role of the original sexual protagonist as well as the ascetic antagonist.

The original myth is told in rather vague terms, like so much of the Ṛg Veda, and may in fact refer not to Brahmā and his daughter but merely to heaven and the dawn: "When the father, bent upon impregnating his own daughter, united with her and discharged his seed on the earth, the benevolent gods generated prayer; they fashioned Vāstoṣpati, the protector of sacred rites."<sup>53</sup> The father and the protector are not named, but the commentary elaborates: "Rudra Prajāpati created Rudra Vāstoṣpati with a portion of himself," identifying Rudra even here with both the protector and the creator. Four other verses in the Ṛg Veda seem to refer to this myth and to connect it with Agni: "[As] he [Agni] made the seed for the great father, heaven . . . the hunter shot him as he embraced his own daughter. Heaven laid the bright seed aside and Agni brought forth a youth. The father, heaven, impregnated his own daughter. The sacrificer into the fire committed incest with his own daughter."<sup>54</sup>

The connection with Rudra is made explicit later in the Brāhmaṇas, which retained all the essentials of the Ṛg Vedic story—the incest, the seed shed upon the earth or into fire, and the punishment—and applied the myth to Prajāpati: "Prajāpati desired his daughter. He went to her, and his seed fell. He shed it in her. Then he heated it so that it would not spoil. He made it into all the animals."<sup>55</sup> This brief story is expanded in another Brāhmaṇa:

Prajāpati desired his daughter. . . . The gods said, "Prajāpati is doing something that is not to be done." They assembled various dreadful forms

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*Studies in the Cult of the Goddess Manasā* (Calcutta, 1966), pp. 191–200; Edward C. Dimock, Jr., and A. K. Ramanujan, "Manasha: Goddess of Snakes," *History of Religions*, III (Winter, 1964), 304.

\*\* See below, Section G2.

<sup>53</sup> Ṛg Veda X.61.7, with the commentary of Sāyaṇa.

<sup>54</sup> Ṛg Veda I.71.5 and 8; I.164.33; III.31.1.

<sup>55</sup> *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa* 8.2.10.

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and made a god to punish Prajāpati. He pierced him, and Prajāpati fled upwards. . . . The seed of Prajāpati poured out, and became a lake. The gods said, "Let not the seed of Prajāpati be ruined." They surrounded it with fire. The winds agitated it, and Agni made it move. The kindled seed became the sun; the blazing sparks became various sages, and the ashes various animals. Rudra claimed that what remained was his, but the gods deprived him of a claim.<sup>56</sup>

The Kumāra story is a further expansion upon these themes. The seed of Prajāpati (Śiva) falls in a woman who cannot bear it (the daughter, or Pārvatī). It forms a lake (or is placed in the Ganges) and is surrounded by fire (swallowed by Agni), whereupon it becomes productive.

### 2. BRAHMĀ VERSUS KĀMA

In the creation myths composed at the time of the Epic, the "desire" which Brahmā felt for his daughter was personified as Kāma. Kāma then took the responsibility for the incestuous act (which even at the time of the Brāhmaṇas was hard for some to accept as the fault of Brahmā himself)<sup>57</sup> and was punished by Śiva as Brahmā Prajāpati was punished by Rudra. The punishment of Kāma by Śiva is generally implied but not narrated in the Brahmā-Kāma story, and it is in fact a separate motif, one which was known at the time of the Epic but only incorporated into Brahmā's story by the time of the Purāṇas.†† A typical version of this myth relates it to the theme of androgynous creation:

Brahmā, in order to create the worlds, meditated and prayed; he broke his body into two parts, half male and half female. When he saw the woman, who was Sāvitrī, Brahmā marvelled at her beauty and was excited by the arrows of Kāma, the male half of the androgyne. His sons reviled Brahmā, saying, "This is your daughter," but Brahmā continued to gaze at her face and even sprouted five heads in order to see her better. All the *tapas* that Brahmā had amassed for the sake of creation was destroyed by his desire for his daughter. Then Brahmā said to his sons, "Create gods and demons and men," and when they had gone to create, Brahmā made love to his daughter. After 100 years she gave birth to a son, Manu. . . .

Then Brahmā was ashamed of his excessive desire for his own daughter, and he cursed Kāma, saying, "Since your arrows excited my heart, Rudra will soon reduce your body to ashes." Then Kāma appeased Brahmā, arguing that he had merely acted as Brahmā had instructed him to do. Brahmā promised Kāma that he would become incarnate again, and Kāma departed, in sorrow because of the curse and in joy because of the remission.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Āitareya Brāhmaṇa* 13.9–10; cf. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.7.4.1–7.

<sup>57</sup> *Brhaddevatā* 4.110–11; *Kausītaki Brāhmaṇa* 6.1–9; cf. Sylvain Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brahmanas* ("Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses," Vol. LXXIII; 2d ed. [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966]), p. 21.

†† See below, Section G.

<sup>58</sup> *Matsya* 3.30–44 and 4.11–21.

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Considerable rearrangement has been made in the filling of the original roles. The male half of the androgyne, who was originally Brahmā, then Rudra, is now Kāma.†† And in keeping with his new character, he incites but does not participate in the act of incest. Kāma here replaces Rudra in another sense as well; for just as Rudra pierces Prajāpati with an arrow to punish him for his incestuous act, so Kāma pierces Brahmā with an arrow to cause that act. Brahmā also fills several of the roles of Rudra; for he acts as chastiser (of Kāma) as well as chastised, bringing upon Kāma the curse of a punishment that Rudra (Śiva) will later fulfil. Rudra then does not revile Brahmā. This part of the role is played by Brahmā's sons, who act on behalf of the ascetic, antierotic Śiva as they often do. In many versions of the myth, Śiva himself appears at the scene of the crime to laugh at Brahmā and to mock him at great length.<sup>59</sup>

### 3. BRAHMĀ VERSUS ŚIVA

The myth of the beheading of Brahmā by Śiva is very popular in India, primarily because it extols the virtue of the Kāpālika ("skull bearer") cult and of Benares ("Kapālamocana," "the freeing of the skull") as a shrine of expiation. The particular basis of the conflict underlying the beheading is the lust of Brahmā; this is not clear from later versions of the myth, but may be seen in certain early versions. The head that Śiva removes is the fifth head of Brahmā, which appeared in the first place because of Brahmā's incestuous lust. It is due to lust that it is destroyed:

Brahmā was dwelling in a lotus, trying to create. From his mouth a beautiful woman appeared; Brahmā was tortured by desire, grabbed her by force, and demanded that she relieve his agony by making love with him. In anger she said to him, "This fifth head is inauspicious on your neck. Four faces would be more suitable for you." Then she vanished, and the fire of Brahmā's anger burnt all the water on earth. Rudra then appeared and attacked the fifth head of Brahmā with his nails; he took up the severed head and became known as the Kapālin [skull bearer]; he wandered over all the sacred places on earth until he came to Kapālamocana in Benares, where the skull fell from his hand and he was purified. The gods praised him, and Śiva the Kapālin created from his own mouth a part of himself, born without a woman, a man who was an ascetic and who wandered over the earth, teaching the Aghora [Kāpālika] path.<sup>60</sup>

The woman in this myth, created by Brahmā, must be his daugh-

†† See Part I, Section B9.

<sup>59</sup> Śiva 2.2.2.15-42, 2.2.3.1-78, 2.2.4.1-34; Kālikā 1.24-65, 2.1-59, 3.1-49; Mahābhāgavata 21.35-45; Skanda 5.2.13.1-20.

<sup>60</sup> Bhaviṣya 3.4.13.1-19.

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ter, though she is not explicitly mentioned as such. Rudra punishes Brahmā for his incest, not for his impiety or pride as in the later versions. The framework of the story is that of the creation myth in which Brahmā attempts to create, fails, and then is assisted by Rudra—who in this myth *helps* Brahmā by cutting off the head that interfered with the process of creation.

In another version, Brahmā's incest is a direct cause of the severing of the fifth head :

Brahmā desired Sarasvatī and went to her, asking her to stay with him. She, being his daughter, was furious at this and said, "Your mouth speaks inauspiciously and so you will always speak in a contrary way." From that day, Brahmā's fifth head spoke evilly and coarsely. Therefore one day when Śiva was wandering about with Pārvati and came to see Brahmā, Brahmā's four heads praised Śiva but his fifth head made an evil sound. Śiva, displeased with the fifth head, cut it off. The skull remained stuck fast to Śiva's hand, and though he was capable of burning it up, Śiva wandered the earth with it for the sake of all people, until he came to Benares.<sup>61</sup>

The secondary cause of the beheading—the insult to Śiva—is here combined with the primary cause—the daughter's curse, and the pious storyteller justifies Śiva's expiation by the argument from *bhakti*, §§ his willing submission "for the sake of all people." Here, as in the first version of the Kāpālika myth, Śiva's aggressive act is not only justified but considered a favor to Brahmā, ridding him of an inauspicious head. The act of beheading, however, is antagonistic, as is obvious from the context as well as the background myth of incest.

The Abbé Dubois records another version of the myth, which restores the sexual basis of the antagonism: "Brahma . . . was born with five heads, but he outraged Parvati, the wife of Siva, and Siva avenged himself by striking off one of the heads of the adulterous god in single combat."<sup>62</sup> There does not seem to be any Sanskrit version of this myth, but the process of substituting Pārvati for the original woman is neatly paralleled by the popular tradition which makes Pārvati (instead of the sages' wives) the one with whom Agni commits adultery.<sup>63</sup> As Brahmā and Agni are often confused with Śiva in the mythology, such a transference is not surprising. In fact, the confusion of Śiva with Brahmā is the

<sup>61</sup> *Śiva*, Jñānasamhitā 49.65–80.

§§ See Part I, Section A1.

<sup>62</sup> Abbé J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, trans. and ed. H. K. Beauchamp (3d ed.; Oxford, 1959), p. 613.

<sup>63</sup> Arthur Miles (Mrs. Paul Danner, Gervée Baronti), *Land of the Lingam* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1933), pp. 219–20; Max-Pol Fouchet, *The Erotic Sculpture of India* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), p. 8.



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explicit cause of the beheading in a South Indian version of the myth :

Long ago, Brahmā and Śiva both had five heads. One day Brahmā came to Pārvatī and she, mistaking him for Śiva because he had five heads, fed him. Śiva returned and criticized Pārvatī for feeding Brahmā before his return; Pārvatī asked Śiva to cut off one of Brahmā's heads so that she could distinguish between them. He did so, and, holding the head in his hand, he became mad and roamed through the burning places. Then Pārvatī took the head in her own hand and became mad ; she is revived by the sound of the temple drum.<sup>64</sup>

Śiva is frequently called Pañcavaktra ("having five heads"), and is so portrayed in the iconography, but it is unusual to see such an explicit reference to the coincidence of attributes between two different gods. The real basis of the beheading is retained as an undercurrent of the myth, however. Pārvatī's inability to distinguish between the two gods would give rise to a sexual conflict between them (here masked by the reference to her "feeding" Brahmā) similar to the incestuous conflict which underlies the Sanskrit versions of the tale.

#### 4. THE COMPETITION BETWEEN BRAHMĀ AND ŚIVA

The sexual basis of the competition between the two gods is revealed in a version of the creation myth which incorporates the great myth of their conflict—the myth of the flame *līṅga* :

Brahmā and Viṣṇu asked Rudra to create. He said, "I will do it," and then he plunged into the water for a thousand years. Brahmā and Viṣṇu began to worry, and Viṣṇu said, "There is not much time left. You must make an effort to create." Brahmā then made all the gods and demons and the other beings. When Śiva emerged from the water, about to begin creation, he saw that the universe was full. He thought, "What will I do? Creation has already been achieved by Brahmā. Therefore I will destroy it and tear out my own seed." So saying, he released a flame from his mouth, setting the universe on fire. Eventually Brahmā propitiated Śiva, who agreed to place in the sun the dangerous fire that he had emitted. Then Śiva broke off his *līṅga*, saying, "There is no use for this *līṅga* except to create creatures." He threw the *līṅga* upon the earth and it broke through the earth and went down to Hell and up to the heavens. Viṣṇu and Brahmā tried in vain to find the top and bottom of it, and they worshipped it.<sup>65</sup>

In this myth, Śiva is castrated not in punishment for some sexual offense—as he is in the Pine Forest—but as evidence of the lack of that very sexuality. Death is necessitated by the fulness of the closed universe ; when Śiva discovers that he is not needed as a

<sup>64</sup> Told by the temple drummer (Pombaikaran) of Dharanpuram, Kongu; personal communication from Brenda E. F. Beck.

<sup>65</sup> *Śiva*, Dharmasamhitā 49.35–86; cf. *Śiva*, Dharmasamhitā 10.1–23, and *MHB* X.17.10–26.

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creator, he becomes a destroyer. Śiva's refusal to create is symbolized by his castration, but this too is ambivalent, for it results in the fertility cult of *liṅga* worship.

The basis of the feud between Śiva and Brahmā is not in this instance the conflict between the ascetic and the incestuous creator, but between the two different valid forms of creation: Śiva opposes the Prajāpati because he is himself a Prajāpati. This is clear from yet another myth of their conflict. When, at the wedding of Śiva and Satī, Brahmā is overcome with lust for the bride and even spills his seed<sup>66</sup> (as he does at the sight of his daughter in the incest myth, of which the wedding myth is a variant), Śiva wishes to kill Brahmā. Viṣṇu, trying to restrain him, argues: "Brahmā was born to perform creation; if he is killed, there can be no other natural creator." But Śiva replies, "I must kill this terrible sinner, but I myself will then create all beings, or by my own seed I will create another creator."<sup>67</sup> This competition between creators, one of them ascetic and the other sexual, is reflected in Ruben's interpretation of the Kapālin myth: "Śiva cut off the head of the Creator God, Brahmā, in order to become the creator himself."<sup>68</sup> This competition is clarified in another version of the creation myth:

Brahmā wished to create, but he did not know how to do it. He became angry, and Rudra was born from his anger. Brahmā gave Rudra a beautiful maiden for his wife, named Gaurī [Pārvatī], and Rudra rejoiced when he received her. Then Brahmā forbade Rudra to do *tapas* at the time of creation, saying, "Rudra, you must perform creation." But Rudra said, "I am unable," and he plunged into the water, for he thought, "One without *tapas* is not able to create creatures." Then Brahmā took Gaurī back; and, wishing to create, he made seven mind-born sons, Dakṣa and his brothers. He gave Gaurī to Dakṣa for a daughter, though she had been formerly promised in marriage to Rudra. Dakṣa rejoiced and began a great sacrifice which all the gods attended. Then, after 10,000 years, Rudra arose from the water, and by the power of his *tapas* he saw all the world before him with its forests and men and beasts, and he heard the chanting of the priests in Dakṣa's sacrifice. Then he became furious and he said, "Brahmā created me and instructed me to perform creation. Who is doing that work now?" and flames issued forth from his ears and turned into ghosts and goblins and various weapons. Rudra destroyed Dakṣa's sacrifice, but he restored it again when the gods praised him. Dakṣa gave his daughter to Rudra as Brahmā asked him to do, and Rudra took her with him to Kailāsa mountain.<sup>69</sup>

Śiva's position here is unambiguous: he rejects the wife he has

<sup>66</sup> Śiva 2.2.19.1-76; 2.2.20.1-25; 2.3.49.3-10; Śiva, Jñānsaṃhitā 18.62-68; Skanda 1.1.26.15-22; 6.77.16-75; Saura 59.54-61; Vāmana 53.56-59; Brahma 72.18.

<sup>67</sup> Śiva 2.2.19.58-60.

<sup>68</sup> Ruben, *Eisenschmiede*, p. 207.

<sup>69</sup> Varāha 1.21.1-88.

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been given (though he is said to have rejoiced upon obtaining her) and does *tapas* because he is unable, rather than unwilling, to create without it. In the shorter version of this myth, Brahmā takes care to tell him, "Create creatures to fill the universe; you are able to do this,"<sup>70</sup> but Rudra disobeys him even then, and he clearly disagrees with him. The rejection of the woman who is the daughter of Dakṣa is the link used by the storyteller to introduce the related myth of the destruction of the sacrifice of Dakṣa, yet another variation on the theme of the conflict between Śiva and Brahmā; for Dakṣa is a Prajāpati who replaces Brahmā in later mythology and who comes to represent sexual creation and incest vis-à-vis ascetic creation.<sup>71</sup> Yet Śiva does not reject the woman outright, nor does he reject creation—merely a particular aspect of it at a particular time.

### 5. THE COMPLEMENTARITY OF BRAHMĀ AND ŚIVA

Śiva's statement that he will become the destroyer, since there is already a creator, is typical of the series of myths in which Śiva, having been forbidden to create immortals, refuses to create mortals and henceforth refuses to create at all.<sup>72</sup> A strong Śaiva bias usually prevails in these myths, and Śiva is not condemned for his passionlessness, as the ascetic sons of Brahmā usually are. But this reversal is only possible because the second path—sexual creation—is understood to be practiced by someone else, in this case Brahmā. The sons in the earlier myth are censured only when they are at that time the only possible source of creation. Thus, later Hinduism resolves the conflict with another division, not into cycles but into different persons, or rather different aspects of the one person who in the other context simply passes through different phases. Brahmā accomplishes sexual creation and Śiva devotes himself to asceticism; the universe is supplied with mortality and immortality. Moreover, by refusing to create mortals or creatures subject to sickness and old age, Śiva indulges in a kind of preventative euthanasia, a reversal of the reversal, so that the net result of his action is creative after all.

<sup>70</sup> *Varāha* 1.33.4.

<sup>71</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.19.56, 2.2.42.22–29; *Līṅga* 1.63.2; *Bhāgavata* 4.2.22–23, 4.7.3; *Skanda* 4.2.87–89, 7.2.9.42; *Vāyu* 1.30.61; *Varāha* 1.33.1–33; *Devībhāgavata* 7.30.27–37; *Kūrma* 1.14.61; *Harivaṃśa* (Bombay: Lakṣmī-Venkaṭeśvara Steam Press, 1833–76), 3.22.1–7.

<sup>72</sup> *MHB* VII, Appendix 1, No. 8, ll. 70–131; *Matsya* 4.30–32; *Vāyu* 1.10.42–59; *Brahmānda* 2.9.68–92; *Śiva* 7.14; *Līṅga* 1.6.10–22; *Skanda* 7.2.9.5–17; *Kūrma* 1.10.17–40.

|| See Part I, Section B9.

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The complementarity of the two creative methods is clear from this variation :

Brahmā created the mind-born sages, who remained celibate and refused to create. Brahmā then created Rudra from his anger, and he gave him various wives and told him to become a Prajāpati and to create progeny with the wives he had received. Rudra created creatures like himself who swallowed up the universe on all sides, burning up the skies with their blazing eyes. Prajāpati was frightened and said, "No more of these creatures ; do *tapas* for the sake of all creatures, and create the universe as it was before." Śiva agreed, and he went to the forest to do *tapas*. Then Brahmā created his mental sons and Kāma.<sup>73</sup>

Here Śiva's act of creation is directly connected with death. Only creation by *tapas* is acceptable from Rudra, and Brahmā supplements this method with his sexual creation and with the creation of Kāma, to preserve the balance.

Thus Brahmā and Śiva participate in aspects of each other so deeply that they exchange roles almost at random. Śiva often acts for or instead of Brahmā, and his opposition to Brahmā is often based upon similarity of purpose. In many of the later myths, sexual creation is personified as Kāma. And just as Brahmā opposes Kāma and curses him, so Śiva brings about the realization of that curse, partly as the ascetic in opposition to Brahmā (resisting the attacks of Kāma that Brahmā has directed) and partly as an extension of Brahmā (chastising Kāma as Brahmā cursed him to be chastised). Moreover, just as Brahmā both curses Kāma and restores him, so Śiva too destroys Kāma, but simultaneously participates in Kāma's nature and increases his power. In this way, the complex identity-opposition relation between Brahmā and the various aspects of Śiva underlies much of what appears to be paradoxical in the later mythology of Śiva.

### G. ŚIVA AND KĀMA

The conflict between Śiva and Kāma is a central point of the Śaiva Purāṇas. In the later texts, Kāma is sent against Śiva by Brahmā, merely out of spite and in revenge against Śiva for chastising Brahmā's incestuous behavior, as well as against Kāma for causing this behavior.<sup>74</sup> In the earlier Purāṇas, however, Kāma is sent by Indra to cause Śiva to marry and beget the son needed by the gods. And in a still earlier era, before Śiva became the ascetic par

<sup>73</sup> *Bhāgavata* 3.12.1-26.

<sup>74</sup> *Brhadharma* 2.53.40-41; *Mahābhāgavata* 12-28; *Śiva* 2.2.8.12-22; *Skanda* 5.2.13.

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excellence, Indra sent Kāma (or his assistants, the *apsaras*-es) to seduce ascetics in order to reduce the threat of their powers. In the context of the Kumāra story, where the Kāma-Śiva conflict takes place, this episode is late.<sup>75</sup> The birth of Kumāra resulted first from the incestuous seed of Prajāpati, then from Agni's seduction of the sages' wives, and then from the gods' need for a general. Yet most of the Purāṇas include the episode of Kāma, and it is highly significant for Śaiva mythology. Moreover, though the episode itself is comparatively late, the interaction of the forces which Śiva and Kāma represent—namely *tapas* and *kāma*—is central to Indian culture from the time of the Vedas and even before. Due to the remarkable continuity of that culture, the more elaborate and explicit myths of the Purāṇas may in fact capture and explain, as they claim to do, the often obscure meaning of the ancient tales.

### 1. THE CHASTITY OF ŚIVA—AND ITS CONTRADICTION

Śiva is the natural enemy of Kāma because he is the epitome of chastity, the eternal *brahmacārīn*, his seed drawn up,<sup>76</sup> the very incarnation of chastity.<sup>77</sup> When Himālaya brings his daughter Pārvati to Śiva, Śiva objects with the traditional argument of misogyny: "This girl with her magnificent buttocks must *not* come near me; I insist upon this. Wise men know that a woman is the very form of Enchantment, especially a young woman, the destruction of ascetics. I am an ascetic, a yogi; what use have I for a woman? An ascetic must never have contact with women."<sup>78</sup> Because of his chastity, Śiva is considered the one man in the universe who can resist Kāma. When Brahmā plots to have Śiva seduced, he says, "But what woman in the triple world could enter his heart, cause him to abandon yoga, and delude him? Even Kāma will not be able to delude him, for Śiva is a perfect yogi and cannot bear even to hear women mentioned."<sup>79</sup> But each of these statements is merely a thesis to be answered with an antithesis: Śiva's chastity is set against his lust, his invulnerability against his susceptibility. Many of the myths illustrating the chastity of

<sup>75</sup> A comparatively early reference to the burning of Kāma by Śiva appears in an inscription of A.D. 473–74, cited in John Faithfull Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and Their Successors* ("Corpus inscriptionum indicarum," Vol. III [Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1888]), No. 18, p. 81, pl. xi, ll. 21–23.

<sup>76</sup> *MHB* XIII.17.45 and 72.

<sup>77</sup> *Kumārasambhava* 5.30.

<sup>78</sup> *Śiva* 2.3.12.28–33.

<sup>79</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.8.17–18; cf. *Matsya* 154.213–16 and *Skanda* 1.2.24.17–20.

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Śiva appear in a mirror image as well, or contain within themselves implications of his lust.

One Śaiva tale apparently in praise of Śiva's chastity is an elaboration upon the myth in which Śiva enlightens Viṣṇu and causes him to leave the form of the boar in which he has married the Earth.## In this version, the Earth is replaced by a group of demon women, but the troublesome sons remain :

Once when Viṣṇu had driven the demons back to Hell, he happened to see there a group of beautiful women ; struck by the arrows of desire, he stayed there and made love to the women, engendering in them sons that troubled the world. To save the gods, Śiva took the form of a bull ; he entered Hell, bellowing, and killed Viṣṇu's sons. Then he enlightened Viṣṇu, saying, "You must not indulge yourself sexually here, a slave to desire, dependent upon women." The other gods wished to enter Hell to see the voluptuous women, but Śiva pronounced a curse, saying, "Except for a perfectly controlled sage or a demon born of me, whoever enters this place will die." Thus Viṣṇu the supreme womanizer was chastised by Śiva, and the universe became happy.<sup>80</sup>

Śiva's position in this myth is fairly unequivocal in its chastity, but even here he assumes the form of a bull, the emblem of sexuality, instead of the mythical *śarabha* beast of the boar myth, and he cleverly modifies the curse to allow himself ("the perfectly controlled sage") and his sons to enjoy the demon women. The second variant elaborates upon this aspect of Śiva until the whole point of the myth is reversed. After repeating the above myth with some minor variations, it continues :

After Śiva had pronounced the curse and the gods had returned to heaven, some time passed. Then one day, when Śiva was rapt in thought and Pārvatī asked him what he was thinking about, Śiva said, "I am thinking about the beauty of the women of Hell, the most beautiful women in the universe." Pārvatī wanted to see them for herself ; she went to Hell and said to the women there, "You are like poisonous vines, for your beauty is of no use. Prajāpati created women for the sake of the sexual enjoyment of men, but Śiva cursed your husbands, forbidding them to enter here. Now let my sons, Śiva's hosts, wise ascetics, be your husbands. [The commentator adds : 'They are ascetics, and so Śiva has not forbidden their entrance here']. Make love with them." Then she vanished. Thus Viṣṇu the supreme womanizer sported with the demon women in Hell.<sup>81</sup>

The reversal of the myth is clear from the reversal of the final line, where Viṣṇu's sport, rather than his chastisement, is remembered. Śiva himself cannot help thinking about the women, and the ambivalence of his position is revealed in the variant provided by his sons—who are allowed to make love to the demon women be-

## See Part I, Section B1.

<sup>80</sup> Śiva 3.22.45–55; 3.23.1–36.

<sup>81</sup> Śiva, Dharmasamhitā 9.46–61.

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cause of their status as ascetics and their supposed chastity. But this paradox is a description of the contradictory nature of Śiva himself.

Indeed, it is almost impossible to find a myth in which Śiva remains chaste throughout, though many myths are based upon the initial premise of his chastity. Even in the *Mahābhārata* passage which describes him as the chaste *brahmacārin*, Śiva is praised as the god who "sports with the daughters and the wives of the sages, with erect hair, a great penis, naked, with an excited look. . . . All the gods worship his *liṅga*."<sup>82</sup>

### 2. THE BURNING OF KĀMA—AND THE REVIVAL

The destruction of the god of desire would seem to be an unequivocally antisexual act, and that is in fact its original significance. The *Mahābhārata* says: "The great *brahmacārin*, Śiva, did not devote himself to the pleasures of lust; the husband of Pārvatī extinguished Kāma when Kāma attacked him, making Kāma bodiless."<sup>83</sup> Yet even here, the chastiser of Kāma is simultaneously called the husband of Pārvatī, the erotic aspect of Śiva. Throughout the Purāṇas, the meaning of the conquest of Kāma by Śiva is undercut by qualifying episodes and even complete reversals: Śiva burns Kāma only to revive him in a more powerful form; Śiva burns Kāma but is nevertheless sexually aroused; Śiva burns Kāma and is therefore a desirable lover; Śiva is himself burnt by Kāma; and, the final Hindu complication, Śiva *is* Kāma.

Rebirth from fire is a generally accepted theme in Hinduism,<sup>84</sup> and ashes are a particularly potent form of seed.<sup>85</sup> The ashes of Kāma, when smeared upon Śiva's body in place of the usual funeral ashes, arouse great desire in him.<sup>86</sup> Thus Kāma's rebirth from his ashes is not surprising; in the Hindu tradition, the burning itself implies the revival. Even in the simple context of the myth, Kāma's power is not destroyed when Śiva burns him. Kāma remains "Anaṅga," bodiless, but is said to retain his sexual function.<sup>87</sup> Later, he is actually revived and given a new body, a new incarnation.

<sup>82</sup> *MHB* XIII, Appendix 1, No. 4, ll. 66–67, and XIII.14.101–2.

<sup>83</sup> *MHB* XII.183.10.3–5.

<sup>84</sup> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.2.4.8.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.8.2.1–2 and 6; *Padma* 4.103.1–26; *Brahmaṇḍa* 2.27.112–13; *Liṅga* 1.34.1–3 and 7–8; *Śiva*, *Jñānasamhitā* 48.86–89; Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>86</sup> *Brhaddharma* 2.53.45–46; *Kālikā* 44.125–26, 45.117–18; *Mahābhāgavata* 24.1–8. Cf. *Brahmavaivarta* 4.43.27, 4.38.12, 4.45.20; *Śiva* 2.3.19.27, 2.5.23.51; *Matsya* 154.259; *Kumārasambhava* 4.34, 4.27.

<sup>87</sup> *Brhaddharma* 2.53.44.

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Often, Śiva revives Kāma at the request of Pārvatī.<sup>88</sup> Even at the time of the original curse, it is said that Kāma will be reborn when Śiva marries, or when he becomes impassioned,<sup>89</sup> that is, when Kāma reasserts his power over Śiva.<sup>90</sup> Pārvatī participates still more directly in the revival of Kāma. She herself is the essence of Kāma even when Kāma is destroyed; when Kāma was burnt and became bodiless, his essence entered into her limbs.<sup>91</sup> Usually, this reincarnation is merely a metaphor: "May the water of Śiva's sweat, fresh from the embrace of Gaurī, which Kāma employs as his aqueous weapon because of his fear of the fire of Śiva's eye, protect you."<sup>92</sup> Pārvatī is of course a particularly apt form for Kāma to assume, as it was for her sake that he was burnt and it was her lover who burnt him, but the poetic image is extended to other women as well,<sup>93</sup> particularly to the wives of the Pine Forest sages: "One woman, strewing flowers before him, seemed to be the flower-bow of Kāma, which had assumed her form when it was frightened by the eye in Śiva's forehead. . . . Another woman teased Śiva, saying, 'Did you open the fiery eye in your forehead and burn Kāma?' to which he replied, 'I am indeed made a laughingstock when he is reborn in your gaze, lovely one.'"<sup>94</sup>

The revival of Kāma for the sake of Śiva's honeymoon already indicates that Śiva has undergone a change of heart, so it is not surprising that the reborn Kāma has powers over Śiva that he did not have before Śiva destroyed him.<sup>95</sup> Śiva reincarnates Kāma with a half of Śiva's embodied essence in him,<sup>96</sup> or he makes Kāma one of his own hosts.<sup>97</sup> In one version of the myth, Śiva revives Kāma at the wedding and gives him permission to use his arrows even against Śiva himself.<sup>98</sup> When the goddess revives Kāma, she promises him: "Śiva will lose his control because of you, and though his hatred of passion will make him angry at you, he will not be able to burn you, and he will marry Pārvatī." When Kāma

<sup>88</sup> *Saura* 54.1-4 and 16-20, 55.1-6.

<sup>89</sup> *Skanda* 5.1.34.36-37; *Śiva* 2.3.24.18-28; *Kālikā* 3.15, 4.16-17; *Brahmavaivarta* 4.39.57.

<sup>90</sup> *Haracarita* 9.154.

<sup>91</sup> *Bṛhaddharma* 2.53.44.

<sup>92</sup> *Kathāsaritsāgara* 2.1.1; cf. 1.1.1., 3.1.2.; and cf. *Kumārasambhava* 1.41.

<sup>93</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* No. 395.

<sup>94</sup> *Bhikṣātānakāvya* 8.20, 9.6.

<sup>95</sup> *Pārvatīpariṇaya* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa (Madras Sanskrit Series No. 1 [Madras, 1898]), 4.34 and 5.32.3.

<sup>96</sup> *Bhaviṣya* 3.4.14.80.

<sup>97</sup> *Śiva* 2.3.19.37-48.

<sup>98</sup> *Kumārasambhava* 7.92-93; *Kathāsaritsāgara* 3.6.60-73.



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then attacks Śiva, Śiva is so heated with desire that he cannot cure the fever of his body, even by lying in snowy waters. Unable to extinguish the flame of Kāma, he decides to marry Pārvatī.<sup>99</sup>

### 3. THE EROTIC APPEAL OF THE CHASTISER OF KĀMA

Many texts imply that Śiva was wounded by Kāma at the time when he supposedly destroyed Kāma.<sup>100</sup> Śiva himself often admits that he is in the power of Kāma,<sup>101</sup> and his supposed conquest of Kāma is often cited satirically when Śiva is erotically engaged:<sup>102</sup>

“So now this Śaṅkara [Śiva], whose asceticism is known through all the world,  
fearful of absence from his mistress, bears her in his very form.  
And they say that we were overcome by him!”  
Victory to Love, who with these words  
presses Priti's [Rati's] hand and falls to laughter.<sup>103</sup>

The basis of the satire is the same as that of the false ascetic; because of his reputation for chastity, Śiva's seduction is all the more to the credit of Kāma and to the seductress. In praising Pārvatī's beauty, Nārada says, “She caused Śiva, who is without passion and is the enemy of Kāma, to wander like a minnow lost in the depths of her loveliness.”<sup>104</sup> This “lack of passion” makes Śiva all the more desirable, as it does the conventional ascetic.\*\*\* The women of Himālaya's city marvel at Śiva's beauty and say, “Kāma's body was not burnt by Śiva when his anger mounted, but I think that out of shame when he saw Śiva, Kāma himself burnt his body.”<sup>105</sup>

It is his supposed invulnerability to desire that causes Pārvatī to desire Śiva; she wants him for her husband because he has destroyed Kāma. Although everyone cites the burning of Kāma when trying to dissuade her from her love of Śiva,<sup>106</sup> Pārvatī merely laughs and replies, “This passionless Śiva, who burnt Kāma, will be won by my *tapas*, for he is loving to his devotees.”<sup>107</sup> But the *bhakti* argument is superfluous here, for the contradiction

<sup>99</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa* 4.30.58–61 and 71–84; cf. *Skanda* 7.1.200.9–30.

<sup>100</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.17.63–64; *Kālikā* 10.54–55.

<sup>101</sup> *Mahābhāgavata* 24.28, 25.25; *Vāmana* 6.36; *Pārvatīpariṇaya* 4.7.

<sup>102</sup> *Śiva* 2.5.51.35–46.

<sup>103</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* No. 323.

<sup>104</sup> *Skanda* 2.4.17.10; cf. *Padma* 6.11.6.

\*\*\* See Part I, Section B4.

<sup>105</sup> *Matsya* 154.473; *Kumārasambhava* 7.67; cf. *Vāmana* 53.30–31.

<sup>106</sup> *Śiva* 2.3.25.45, 2.3.23.5; *Skanda* 1.1.21.150, 1.2.25.67; *Matsya* 154.327–28.

<sup>107</sup> *Śiva* 2.3.23.12; *Skanda* 1.1.21.155.

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is inherently resolvable in psychological terms. Kālidāsa expresses this resolution in metaphor:

Though Kāma's body was destroyed by Śiva's eye,  
his arrow, unable to reach its goal  
and repelled by Śiva's unbearable cry of defiance,  
wounded Pārvatī deeply in her heart.<sup>108</sup>

Thus Pārvatī desires Śiva because he has destroyed Desire. And when she has won him, the poet describes her as "naively smiling when they say that he hates Love."<sup>109</sup> In the midst of another erotic adventure, Śiva remarks, "Kāma is attacking me, remembering our former enmity."<sup>110</sup> Thus Śiva admits that his "destruction" of Kāma has merely added to Kāma's power over him.

### 4. THE LUST OF THE CHASTISER OF KĀMA

Even without the episodes of the revival of Kāma or the eventually successful attack waged by him, the very act of burning Kāma betrays Śiva's vulnerability and innately erotic nature. Śiva is highly aroused by Kāma before he can regain control of himself.<sup>111</sup> Śiva himself muses upon this phenomenon: "How can I lust to make love to Pārvatī when she has not performed a vow of *tapas*? And how is it that I wish to rape her? How can I have been excited by desire when I do not wish it right now? For some reason I seem to be attracted to this girl and to wish to unite with her."<sup>112</sup>

When Kāma uses various magical wiles to arouse Śiva, entering his heart in the form of the humming of bees or shooting him with flower arrows, Śiva regains his composure with great effort by various techniques of yoga.<sup>113</sup> The subduing of lust is an important part of yoga philosophy, which emphasizes that the lust must be present in the first place for the yogi to work upon: ††† "Once the mind has stimulated the power of sex, the yogi cannot recover his mastery over himself, the brilliance of his inner light, until he has burned up lust by bringing the power of his seed up to the fifth center."<sup>114</sup> Just as Kāma's body is preserved in its essence in the ashes on the chest of the ascetic, so the power of lust within the

<sup>108</sup> *Kumārasambhava* 5.54.

<sup>109</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnaśa* No. 65.

<sup>110</sup> *Kālikā* 52.112.

<sup>111</sup> *Śiva*, *Jñānasamhitā* 9–18, 10.73; *Śiva* 2.3.18; *Skanda* 1.1.21, 5.2.13; *Vāmana* 6; *Matsya* 154.237–38.

<sup>112</sup> *Kālikā* 44.110–12.

<sup>113</sup> *Matsya* 154.235–48; *Haracarita* 9.53–57; *Skanda* 5.2.13.27–35.

††† See Part I, Section D3.

<sup>114</sup> R. K. Narayan, *Gods, Demons, and Others* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 94.

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ascetic is not fully destroyed but is transmuted into ascetic power.

The original presence of the emotion of lust is implied in Śiva's violent reaction to Kāma; were he totally impervious, he would not even have bothered to burn Kāma.<sup>115</sup> A Ceylonese version of the burning of Kāma makes explicit this vulnerability of Śiva:

Maha Ishvara [Śiva] is God. Uma his wife lives in his turban because from the turban it is very easy to have sexual intercourse. One day Uma saw a man of great beauty. She had sex relations with the man. When Maha Ishvara heard of this he was angry and gazed on the man with his third eye. The man was reduced to ashes. Uma craved Maha Ishvara's pardon and begged him to recreate the man. The man was recreated but he was without genitals.<sup>116</sup>

Here, Śiva injures Kāma not because Kāma has tried to inspire lust in him, but because he has tried to interfere with it. The reversal of the usual roles is revealed by the nature of the punishment inflicted upon Kāma: castration, which is the central motif of many of the myths of Śiva. The significance of this punishment in this context, and its pertinence to both Śiva and Kāma, arises from the theme of the destruction (or castration) and resurrection of the fertility god, Śiva or Kāma. Meyer suggests that the myth of Śiva's burning of Kāma stems from the Indo-Germanic rite of burning the tree that symbolizes the daemon of fertility (the ancient "Indra pole"), and that this burning was later replaced by the self-castration of the god.<sup>117</sup> Thus, just as Śiva's castration is procreative, releasing into the universe at large the power of his *liṅga*, so his burning of Kāma is ultimately conducive to fertility.

### 5. THE PARTIAL IDENTITY OF ŚIVA AND KĀMA

In a relationship similar to that which characterizes his conflict with Brahmā, Śiva opposes Kāma in part due to their opposition as ascetic and erotic gods, but in part also because of their competition as fertility gods. The argument used to make Brahmā retract his curse upon Kāma is used to make Śiva revive him: "Have mercy toward Kāma. It was you who created him and who instructed him in the very action which he has performed, using the ability that you gave him."<sup>118</sup> The South Indian tradition

<sup>115</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa* No. 4.

<sup>116</sup> Nur O. Yalman, personal communication based on field work undertaken in Ceylon (central) in 1954-55; cited by Edmund R. Leach, "Pulleyar and the Lord Buddha: An Example of Syncretism," *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review* (Summer, 1962), pp. 89-90.

<sup>117</sup> Johann Jakob Meyer, *Trilogie der Altindischer Mächte und Feste der Vegetation* (Zürich: Max Niehans Verlag, 1937), I, 206.

<sup>118</sup> *Kālikā* 44.121-22; *Skanda* 1.1.21.96.

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states that Śiva created Kāma and gave him the boon of exciting love among all creatures when Kāma had adored the Śiva-*liṅga*.<sup>119</sup> Śiva, in his turn, partakes of the nature of Kāma: he becomes Kāma to seduce the Pine Forest women;<sup>120</sup> he resembles Kāma when seducing many *apsaras*-es and mortal women;<sup>121</sup> he is a master of the *Kāmasūtra*;<sup>122</sup> and he is “the Lord of Kāma [Kāmeśvara]” when he marries.<sup>123</sup>

One passage links Śiva with Kāma in the seduction of a number of sages, including several who are aspects of Śiva or the enemies of Śiva: “Śiva, assisted by Kāma, deluded many heroes by his powers of magic, causing Viṣṇu to rape the wives of other men, Indra to sin with Gautama’s wife and to be cursed, Agni to be conquered by Kāma, Dakṣa and his brothers to lust for their sister, Brahmā to wish to make love to his daughter—and all of them were deluded by Śiva.”<sup>124</sup> These myths, which involve Śiva either as seduced or as seducer, are lumped together to glorify the erotic aspect of Śiva.

The complexity of the manner in which Kāma, Śiva, Brahmā, and Agni—all representing different aspects of creation—assume one another’s roles may be seen in a version of the burning of Kāma which transposes almost every episode of the myth, beginning with what is usually the end: the gods beg Śiva to marry and beget a son; Śiva refuses to have anything to do with a woman, but he gives them his seed [*tejas*, fiery glory], placed in Agni, and returns to his meditation. Only at this point does Kāma appear:

The gods went with Śiva’s seed and told Brahmā what had happened; Brahmā laughed, and from his mouth Kāma appeared, born from Brahmā’s creative heat [*tejas*]. Kāma’s power [*tejas*] caused men and women everywhere to unite, tortured by lust, but Śiva created a great ascetic fire [*tejas*] from his third eye and assuaged that sickness. Kāma became angry at this, and, taking up his arrows, he filled Śiva with desire. Śiva married Pārvatī, the *yoginī*, and made love to her for a thousand years. The gods, afraid that the world would be destroyed, went there and praised Śiva. Śiva and Pārvatī were ashamed and angry, and a great heat arose from them. The gods fled, but Kāma alone remained there, unafraid; the fire of Śiva’s anger burnt Kāma to ashes, but Rati propitiated Śiva so that he promised to revive Kāma with a half of his own essence.<sup>125</sup>

Almost every element of the basic myth has been transposed: the

<sup>119</sup> R. Dessigane, J. Filliozat, and P. Z. Pattabiramin, *Les légendes śivaïtes de Kāñcīpuram* (Pondichéry, 1964), No. 48, pp. 61–62.

<sup>120</sup> *Skanda* 5.3.38.17.

<sup>121</sup> *Padma* 5.53.6.

<sup>122</sup> *Śiva* 2.3.50.38.

<sup>123</sup> *Brahmaṇḍa* 4.14.18–21.

<sup>124</sup> *Śiva* 5.4.16–39.

<sup>125</sup> *Bhaviṣya* 3.4.14.45.

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giving of the seed comes first instead of last; Kāma is created when Brahmā laughs at the way in which Śiva has shed his seed instead of when Śiva laughs at the shedding of Brahmā's seed;††† Kāma attacks Śiva because Śiva has burnt the essence of Kāma instead of the usual situation in which Śiva burns Kāma because Kāma has attacked him; and after the wedding, when Śiva usually restores Kāma, he finally burns him up—not for stimulating desire but for interrupting it, as Agni usually does. In fact, the burning of Kāma replaces the “burning” of Agni (i.e., the cursing of Agni to bear the burning seed), which has already taken place at the beginning of the whole sequence. This exchange of roles evolves from the basic similarity and flexibility of the characters involved, all of whom epitomize some aspect of *tejas*, the fiery power to create or destroy: *tejas* is Agni; it is the burning seed of Śiva, the creative laugh of Brahmā, the power of Kāma to inspire desire, the power generated by the love making of Śiva and Pārvatī, and the fire of Śiva's third eye. All of these are essential to the myth, no matter at what place in the myth they may occur.

As Śiva and Kāma are both creators, their roles are closely intertwined in the creation myths, as are the roles of Śiva and Brahmā. In one version of the androgynous creation, Kāma is the male half instead of Śiva,<sup>126</sup>§§§ and Brahmā creates Kāma in order to proceed with eternal creation, just as he enlists the aid of Rudra when his ascetic sons fail him. Creation usually proceeds from a combination of the erotic and ascetic powers; so the ultimate power of Kāma is derived from the force of his original essence strengthened by the contact with Śiva:

Śiva reduced Kāma to ashes, and the fire from his third eye then yawned wide to burn the universe. But then, for the sake of the world, Śiva dispersed that fire among mangoes and the moon and flowers and bees and cuckoos—thus he divided the fire of Kāma. That fire which had pierced Śiva inside and outside, kindling passion and affection, serves to arouse people who are separated, reaching the hearts of lovers, and it blazes night and day, hard to cure.<sup>127</sup>

Kāma's power is thus no longer concentrated in one anthropomorphic form but is diffused into the world, like the demons from Pandora's box. It is only by “destroying” Kāma that Śiva releases the full power of Kāma, the more compelling as it is augmented by contact with Śiva's own force. The interaction of the

††† See Part I, Section B2.

<sup>126</sup> *Brahmavaivarta* 4.35.39.

§§§ See Part I, Section B9, and above, Section F2.

<sup>127</sup> *Matsya* 154.250–55.

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two supposedly incompatible fires—the fire of desire and the fire of asceticism—is clear from the context. The phrase “the fire of Kāma” is a pun, denoting the fire used *by* Kāma and *against* him as well. The image of the intermingling fires (transmuted into the mango and cuckoo) appears in a classical verse :

Within the wood the cuckoos charm the heart  
with warbling of their throats grown strong  
from eating of fresh mango buds.  
What here pretend to be their eyes,  
if but the truth were known, are sparks  
fanned by the flames of Śiva's glance  
from the coals of burning Love.<sup>128</sup>

Yet, in spite of all the examples of the interchanging roles of the two gods and the intermingling of their powers, it is clear that whereas Kāma is merely one aspect of Śiva, the reverse is not true. Śiva is Kāma—but he is more as well, and it is this “more” that opposes Kāma. Śiva is the god of virility, Kāma the god of sensuality.<sup>129</sup> Śiva burns Kāma because of Kāma's frivolous approach to a matter which for Śiva involves the procreation of the cosmos rather than the titillation which is Kāma's stock in trade. When Pārvatī accuses Śiva of taking no pleasure in Desire, Śiva replies : “Our love is more than Desire ; how could it be born of mere Desire ? Formerly, I made the universe by giving birth to Desire, and I myself made Desire for the sexual pleasure of each person. How then can you reproach me for burning Desire ? Kāma thought that I was just like the other gods, and he disturbed my mind, and so I burnt him to ashes.”<sup>130</sup>

From this it appears that Śiva objects not to Kāma's essence, which he accepts as his own, but to Kāma's particular way of manifesting it. Similarly, Brahmā, who created Kāma to excite creatures, cursed him not for doing so but for doing it at an inappropriate time and place. Both Śiva and Kāma are fertility gods, but Śiva is ascetic and destructive as well ; and Śiva has not merely assimilated the character of Kāma, for Kāma is a comparative latecomer to the Indian scene, and Śiva's creative aspect is taken from Indra and Agni and Brahmā long before the advent of Kāma. It is in Agni in particular that Śiva and Kāma merge, both being aspects of the erotic fire, while Śiva also represents the ascetic fire.

<sup>128</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa* No. 171.

<sup>129</sup> P. Thomas, *Kāma Kalpa: The Hindu Ritual of Love* (11th ed.; Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala, 1959), p. 114.

<sup>130</sup> *Śiva* 7.1.24.43–45.

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### H. ASCETICS, HOUSEHOLDERS, AND FOREST-DWELLERS IN ŚAIVA MYTHOLOGY

In some versions of the Pine Forest myth, Śiva acts as an ascetic against the wives of the sages to make the sages devote themselves to more perfect *tapas*. In others he acts as an erotic god to shock the sages out of their *tapas* and back to their marital responsibilities. This confusion of purposes is strengthened by the ambiguity of Śiva himself in this respect. Śiva resolves these conflicts to a great extent within his own character, and the failure of the myth to come to a similar resolution with regard to his human counterparts, the forest-dwellers, is due to the innate character of the myth, which, although free to pursue certain solutions impossible in the world of reality, must ultimately falter in the attempt to resolve a true social contradiction. |||| Śiva himself opposes the compromise attempted by the forest-dwellers, striving in different versions to correct flaws either of asceticism or of worldliness, so that one goal does not eclipse the other.

#### 1. ŚIVA VERSUS THE FOREST-DWELLERS

Śiva's opposition to the wives of the sages is based in part upon his character as the chaste, misogynist ascetic, but also upon the more generally held view that women can only cause trouble when they accompany their husbands to the forest, #### a theory which Śiva proves by seducing them. Śiva says, "Their wives are princesses proud of their beauty, and they befoul the sages' minds so that the sages curse whatever men enter the woods, in fear of the infidelity of their own wives. . . . Those 'ascetics' lust for their wives' lotus mouths."<sup>131</sup> The sages themselves attribute their shortcomings to their marital status: "We have the wits of fools; the Self has not been revealed to the householder."<sup>132</sup>

Just as much evidence can be adduced for the opposite point of view—that Śiva comes to the forest to teach the sages to give up their *tapas* and to devote themselves to their wives. Brahmā says to the sages, "You live in a hermitage but you are overcome by anger and lust; yet the true hermitage of a wise man is his home, while for the man who is not a true yogi even the hermitage is merely a house."<sup>133</sup> Agrawala sees in this myth the doctrine by

||| See Part I, Section A1.

#### See Part I, Section C2.

<sup>131</sup> *Haracarita* 10.27-188; *Yāgīśvaramāhātmya* 27b.10.

<sup>132</sup> *Skanda* 6.258.25-26.

<sup>133</sup> *Vāmana* 43.87.

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which "one performs the ordained duties of the householder's life and thus obtains the objective of true renunciation,"<sup>134</sup> that is, the traditional attempt to reconcile the two goals.\*\*\*\* This is Śiva's familiar antiascetic role, the Dionysian aspect that he assumes in order to oppose the *tapas* of the sons of Brahmā (who are the Pine Forest sages)<sup>135</sup> and to send them back to the world of normal social involvement.

In this way, both points of view are often expressed side by side in a single version, and almost all versions agree on a somewhat modified form of each extreme: Śiva praises *śanti*, calm self-control and lack of passion, even in versions which condemn violent *tapas*,<sup>136</sup> and he teaches the value of *liṅga* worship even while criticizing excessive attachment to one's wife.<sup>137</sup> He points out the insufficiency of mere *tapas* alone: "The sages are not free from emotions, though they have entered the forest and performed the rituals. . . . The smearing of ashes upon the body, the wearing of great matted locks, the bald head, garland of skulls, nakedness, the ochre robe—the whole vow is made vain by desire and anger. Being in such a state, they will not obtain Release by means of *tapas*, which merely dries up the body."<sup>138</sup> Desire must be conquered, not denied; it is by means of *liṅga* worship that *tapas* becomes successful; once the sages with their wives have worshiped his *liṅga*, they succeed;<sup>139</sup> yet they must honor the *liṅga* while maintaining true chastity and great *tapas*.<sup>140</sup> *Tapas*—with true chastity—and devotion to their wives—with *liṅga* worship—each must be done in the proper way, and then they sustain rather than oppose each other.

### 2. ŚIVA'S FAILURE TO RECONCILE THE ROLES OF ASCETIC AND HOUSEHOLDER

The conflict within Śiva's own character is more inescapable and yet ultimately more possible to resolve. The initial attempt at

<sup>134</sup> Vasudeva Sarana Agrawala, *Vāmana Purāṇa: A Study* (Benares: All-India Kashiraj Trust, 1964), p. 87.

\*\*\*\* See Part I, Section C1.

<sup>135</sup> *Kūrma* 2.39.39–40; *Haracarita* 10.7–8; *Skanda* 7.3.39.8; *Vāmana* 43.40–95, 44.1–39.

<sup>136</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa* 2.27; *Vāmana* 43–44; *Kūrma* 2.39.43–67; *Liṅga* 1.29 and 31; *Darpadalana* 7.

<sup>137</sup> *Vāmana* 6 and 43; *Yāgīśvaramāhātmya*; *Śiva*, *Dharmasamhitā* 10; *Jñānasamhitā* 42; *Liṅga* 1.29 and 31; *Skanda* 5.2.11, 6.1.6, 7.1.187, 7.3.39; *Brahmāṇḍa* 2.27.

<sup>138</sup> *Vāmana* 43.52; *Darpadalana* 7.68.

<sup>139</sup> *Yāgīśvaramāhātmya* 27b.

<sup>140</sup> *Kūrma* 2.39.2–5, 2.38.60.



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resolution may at first result not in a successful embodiment of both aspects but rather in the achievement of neither one. Menā, the mother of Pārvatī, scorns Śiva because he is penniless and makes love to Pārvatī constantly<sup>141</sup>—that is, she sees him as a bad husband (poor) and a bad yogi (lascivious) rather than as a good husband (virile) and a good yogi (indifferent to material objects). Similarly, Dakṣa does not see Śiva as one thing or another:

“He is not primarily an ascetic, for how can an ascetic bear weapons as he does? And he cannot be counted among the householders, for he lives in a burning-ground. He is not a *brahmacārin*, since he has married, and how could he be a forest-dweller, since he is deluded with pride in his supreme lordship [and a forest-dweller must give up all material ties]? He belongs to none of the four classes, and is neither male nor female [because he is an androgyne]; and he certainly cannot be a eunuch, for his *liṅga* is an object of worship.”<sup>142</sup>

A similar objection to Śiva’s unique behavior in the Pine Forest is the basis of the sages’ curse: “This is not the kind of behavior proper for householders like us; nor is it the manner of those who are fond of chastity, nor of those who dwell in the forest. It is not the *dharma* for ascetics, either; it is not done anywhere.”<sup>143</sup> The problem underlies the statement made by the Seven Sages to test Pārvatī: There are two kinds of pleasures in the world, mental and physical. Śiva, being a disgusting beggar, is of no use for pleasures of the body, and, being inauspicious because of his necrophilic associations, he cannot even satisfy the longings of the mind.<sup>144</sup>

It is frequently said against Śiva in the myths that he is a bad, or even a false, ascetic because of his involvement with Pārvatī. The demon Jālandhara mocks Śiva: “How can you live on alms and yet keep the beautiful Pārvatī? Give her to me, and wander from house to house with your alms bowl. You have fallen from your vow. . . . You are a yogi; what need have you for the gem of wives? You live in the woods attended by goblins and ghosts; being a naked yogi, you should give your wife to one who will appreciate her better than you do.”<sup>145</sup> This sexual involvement makes Śiva vulnerable to his enemies and reduces his ascetic powers. The combination of roles works against him in the opposite

<sup>141</sup> *Vāyu* 2.30.32.

<sup>142</sup> *Skanda* 4.2.87.29–35.

<sup>143</sup> *Brahmaṇḍa* 2.27.28–29.

<sup>144</sup> *Matsya* 154.330–39; *Padma* 5.40.322–33; *Haracarita* 9.96–100.

<sup>145</sup> *Padma* 6.11.45–47, and 49, 6.11.25–26, 6.101.19–20; *Skanda* 2.4.17.18–19; *Śiva* 2.5.19.8–9.

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way as well: a number of texts point out that, being an ascetic, Śiva is a somewhat unsatisfactory husband.<sup>146</sup> As Śiva himself puts it: "I am the greatest of the eleven Rudras, the lord of yoga; how can I take a beautiful wife, a woman who is the very form of Illusion? Any yogi ought to regard every woman as if she were his mother; I am a yogi; how can I marry a woman, my mother?"<sup>147</sup>

In addition to the classical problems of the married yogi, Śiva has certain other problems due to his immortality. This particularly complicates the knotty problem of the son of the ascetic:

Pārvatī wished to have a natural son, but Śiva said, "I am not a householder, and I have no use for a son. The wicked gods presented me with a wife, but a wife is the most useless thing for a man who is without passion. Offspring are a noose and I will have none. Householders have need of a son and wealth; for them, a wife is necessary for the sake of a son, and sons are necessary to give the oblations to the ancestors. But I never die, and so I have no need for a son; when there is no disease, what use is medicine?" Still Pārvatī insisted, "What you say is true, but nevertheless I wish to have a child. When you have begotten a child, you can return to your yoga. I will take care of the son and you can be a yogi as you wish. I have a great desire for the kiss of a son's mouth, and since you have made me your wife you should beget a child upon me. If you wish, your son will be averse to marriage, so that you will not establish a whole lineage."<sup>148</sup>

Thus a son is avoided by Śiva for the very reason that mortals usually need one: for the sake of immortality through progeny.†††† The conflict cannot be resolved in cycles, as Pārvatī attempts to do in suggesting that the son will be chaste to make up for the sexual lapse of the father, because this involves the very chain of rebirth from which Śiva, as the epitome of the yogi, has divorced himself and of which he, as a god, has no need. Nor can it be solved simply by the shorter phases of sex and yoga which alternate in the life of Śiva†††† (as she suggests, after begetting the child he may return to yoga, as he does after the birth of Skanda), for, as a mythological and symbolic figure, Śiva is *simultaneously* yogi and husband. In this particular instance, the solution is the creation of a magical, unnatural child for Pārvatī, as the mortal solution was often the birth of an illegitimate child from the unnaturally shed seed of the yogi.

This conflict leads to many quarrels between Śiva and Pār-

<sup>146</sup> Śiva 2.2.16.41 and 44, 2.3.36.12, 2.3.27.32; Skanda 1.1.35.27-34, 1.1.22.67-81, 2.25.59-66.

<sup>147</sup> Bhaviṣya 3.4.14.40-43.

<sup>148</sup> Brhadharma 2.60.7-51; cf. Haracarita 9.175-84.

†††† See Part I, Section B8.

†††† See below, Section I.

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vatī<sup>149</sup> in which she frequently berates him for his antierotic behavior. When she asks him why he has burnt Kāma, he answers lamely that it was not he who burnt Kāma, but merely his third eye.<sup>150</sup> At other times she teases him: "You did *tapas* for a long time in order to obtain me as your wife; then why did you destroy Kāma? When Kāma has been destroyed, what use have you for a wife? This is an act of a yogi [not of a husband], to destroy Kāma. . . . If you take no sexual pleasure in me, how have you managed to make love to me? But sexual pleasure cannot make you happy, for you burnt Kāma to ashes."<sup>151</sup> She holds his asceticism responsible for the antierotic turn of mind that leads him to insult her sexual pride. Her resentment of his *tapas* is reflected in the belief that South Indian yogis, snake charmers, and scavengers "account for their condition as resulting from a curse that was imposed because of some slighting remarks made regarding Parvatī's breasts."<sup>152</sup>

### 3. THE RECONCILIATION OF ŚIVA AND PĀRVATĪ

The quarrels are an important part of the mythology of Śiva and Pārvatī, in part because they demonstrate the conflict between the aspects of Śiva, but also because, in the Hindu view, quarrels, violence, and separation enhance rather than mar a sexual relationship.<sup>153</sup> The quarrels of Śiva and Pārvatī bring about a hiatus in their sexual union that makes it possible for them to replenish their powers by means of *tapas*.§§§§ Then, reconciled, they can apply those powers to the process of procreation. In the cyclic view, therefore, the quarrel is ultimately a sexual stimulus. This is most graphically illustrated by the solution of one argument: "As Śiva and Pārvatī quarreled, the uproar from that quarrel burst through the ground and became a *liṅga*. The gods named it the *Liṅga* of the Lord of Quarrels, and whoever worships it is for-

<sup>149</sup> Edward J. Thompson and Arthur Marshman Spencer, *Bengali Religious Lyrics, Śākta* (Calcutta: Association Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), Nos. XCII, C, XCVI, XCVII; *Padma* 4.110.248-69; *Subhāṣitaratnaḥa* Nos. 34 and 59; *Kumārasambhava* 8.49-51; *Hālāsyamāhātmya* No. 57; *Skanda* 5.2.40.17-19; Dinesh Chandra, Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1911), pp. 245, 248.

<sup>150</sup> *Saura* 54.4.

<sup>151</sup> *Mahābhāgavata* 23.5-8; *Śiva* 7.24.33-35.

<sup>152</sup> G. W. Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānphati Yogis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 57.

<sup>153</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnaḥa*, part 22, vss. 700-751; *Kāmasūtra* II.4-5; E. C. Dimock, Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon; Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava Sāhajyā Cult of Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 212.

§§§§ See below, Section I.

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ever free from quarrels in his house."<sup>154</sup> The quarrel produces the symbol of sexual union which explicitly prevents quarrels, a most concise example of the workings of cyclic Śaiva mythology.

When Śiva quarrels with Pārvatī in his ascetic aspect, he reunites with her in his erotic aspect.<sup>155</sup> But the rapprochement may come about from the opposite direction as well: Śiva may remain an ascetic and Pārvatī may come to accept him in this aspect. Though she often berates him for lacking a house during the rainy season,<sup>156</sup> she consents to go with him above the clouds to avoid the rain;<sup>157</sup> she comes to accept the clouds and mountains as a more wonderful kind of house than the conventional one. Her attachment to Śiva is unconventional, and incomprehensible to her parents,<sup>158</sup> but it is not without cause. Just as she desires him because he has destroyed Kāma, so she loves him for the very reasons that are cited against him: "Bhola [the fool, a name of Śiva] is ever laughing and weeping and knows no one save me. He is always eating hemp, and I must stay near him. I cannot keep from worrying . . . about this madman."<sup>159</sup> The funeral ashes on his chest, the third eye in his forehead, the matted locks through which the river Ganges flows, the snakes which adorn him everywhere, the bloody elephant skin wrapped around his chest, or his nakedness—all may transcend their conventional and literal repulsiveness and exert a magical erotic power. When Śiva, in disguise, reviles himself before her to test her,<sup>160</sup> he means it ostensibly as a deterrent to her love for him, but there is in all the wine and wildness which he seems to censure the Dionysian quality of life that strengthens her love even as he speaks of horrible things.

The ambiguous nature of Śiva's appeal is illustrated by a benedictory poem in which desire masquerades as fear:

"Whence comes this perspiration, love?"  
 "From the fire of your eye."  
 "Then why this trembling, fair-faced one?"  
 "I fear the serpent prince."

<sup>154</sup> *Skanda* 5.2.18.31–34.

<sup>155</sup> Ethel Beswick, *Tales of Hindu Gods and Heroes* (Bombay: Jaico, 1959), pp. 106–7; *Skanda* 6.253.1–37, 6.254.1–104.

<sup>156</sup> *Brahma* 38.23–40; *Harivaṃśa* 1.29.37; *Brahmāṇḍa* 3.67.32–36; *Vāyu* 2.30.29–58; *Śiva*, *Jñānasamhitā* 14.22.

<sup>157</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.22.1–54; *Kālikā* 15.1–53; *Vāmana* 1.11–31.

<sup>158</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.23.1–19, 1.2.23.1–59, 7.2.9.24; *Śiva* 2.3.8.8–13, 2.3.9.5, 2.3.22.20–23, 2.3.31.1–52, 2.3.32.1–65, 2.3.30.26–54, 2.3.43.1–65, *Śiva*, *Jñānasamhitā* 16–18; *Bhāgavata* 4.2.11–16; *Brahmavaivarta* 4.40.71–111; *Haracarita* 9.39 and 43.

<sup>159</sup> Thompson and Spencer, *op. cit.*, No. XCVIII.

<sup>160</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.22.67–68; 1.2.25.59–66; *Śiva* 2.3.27.32; *Kumārasambhava* 5.62–73.

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“But still, the thrill that rises on your flesh?”  
“Is from the Ganges’ spray, my lord.”  
May Gauri’s hiding thus her heart  
for long be your protection.<sup>161</sup>

Śiva’s horrible ornaments fascinate her, revealing the hidden desire in destruction, just as he shows, in the burning of Kāma, the destruction that may pervade desire.

### 4. ŚIVA AS HOUSEHOLDER AND ASCETIC

Thus the asceticism which seems at first to interfere with his life as a householder is seen to enhance it, and it is therefore not surprising that Śiva appears often as the householder par excellence.<sup>162</sup> He is said to have married Satī and become a householder,<sup>163</sup> to have become incarnate as a householder,<sup>164</sup> to have married with the conventional rituals and to have lived as a householder with Pārvatī,<sup>165</sup> and to have envied Brahmā and Viṣṇu their married lives.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, though Śiva cannot have a conventional son, he is nevertheless capable of enjoying unconventional pleasures of paternity. Little Kumāra plays with the cobra that serves Śiva as a necklace, counting his hoods or fangs with childish inaccuracy—“one, three, ten, eight”—so that Śiva and Pārvatī laugh.<sup>167</sup> Kumāra romps among all the ascetic accouterments:

May Guha [Skanda] save you from misfortune,  
who rolls at will upon his father’s chest  
until his limbs are whitened from the funeral ash;  
who from the headdress then dives deep into the Ganges  
at the coldness of whose stream he cries aloud,  
till trembling and with chattering teeth  
he holds his hands before the blazing eye.<sup>168</sup>

In another verse, the horrible ornaments are used as toys or “mistaken” for toys, in the Sanskrit convention, quite transcending the natural contrast between the hideous and charming aspects of the objects:

He touches the garland made of skulls  
in hope that they are geese

<sup>161</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* No. 75.

<sup>162</sup> G. S. Ghurye, *Gods and Men* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1962), p. 31; Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>163</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.1.19.

<sup>164</sup> *Śiva* 3.13–15.

<sup>165</sup> *Mahābhāgavata* 12.17.

<sup>166</sup> *Kālikā* 10.26–28.

<sup>167</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.27.107–8; *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* No. 95.

<sup>168</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* No. 92.

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and shakes the crescent moon with eagerness to grasp  
a lotus filament.  
Thinking the forehead-eye a lotus flower,  
he tries to pry it open.  
May Skanda thus intent on play  
within his father's arms protect you.<sup>169</sup>

In this manner, the ascetic and householder meet in Śiva without contradiction or compromise, though not without a certain amount of conflict. This tension, expressed by the mythology in terms of marital discord and unnatural children, is ultimately obviated by the attitude of Pārvatī, as it is accepted in the mind of the worshiper, through *bhakti*, a deep love for the god, transcending all reason. The Purāṇas abound in explicit statements of Śiva's reconciliation of the two roles: "When Śiva became incarnate as the Rudra on Kailāsa mountain, he was a yogi, free from any emotions; he then became a householder, marrying the best of women. Though he was an ascetic, he married her, herself an ascetic, at the importunity of Viṣṇu."<sup>170</sup> This importunity is described in detail:

Kṛṣṇa summoned Śiva and said, "Marry the Goddess." Śiva smiled and said, "I will not take a wife like any natural man. A woman is an obstacle to knowledge and salvation, an instrument of lust and delusion. I do not want a household wife; I wish to remain free of all enjoyments and sexual pleasures." Kṛṣṇa said, "You are the greatest of ascetics and yogis; but now you must marry and enjoy erotic pleasures for a thousand years. You must not be merely an ascetic; in time you will be a householder and a man of *tapas* as you wish. And only an evil woman brings the misery that you see in union with a wife; not a chaste woman. Satī will be your wife, and men will worship your *liṅga* placed in the *yoni* of the Goddess."<sup>171</sup>

Kṛṣṇa here convinces Śiva to avoid being "merely" an ascetic or a householder. The argument—that a virtuous wife is a boon and only a wicked woman a burden—is used against Śiva by the Pine Forest sages, who try to convince him that his wife must be abandoned because she is unchaste, while they wish their own "chaste" wives to remain with them.<sup>172</sup>

Without any feeling of contradiction, the devotee sees in Śiva the realization of all possibilities: he is an ascetic and a householder at once; of course he is the eternal *brahmacārī*; and he is a forest-dweller in all those myths in which he performs *tapas* with Pārvatī. A passage similar to Dakṣa's diatribe against Śiva appears in a hymn in praise of Śiva: "You are not a god or a

<sup>169</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnaṅga* No. 91.

<sup>170</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.1.3–5.

<sup>171</sup> *Brahmavaivarta* 1.6.1–40.

<sup>172</sup> *Kūrma* 2.38.25–32.

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demon, nor a mortal, nor an animal ; you are not a Brahmin nor a man nor a woman nor a eunuch.”<sup>173</sup> Even the accusations of Dakṣa and the sages are based not on the absence of any particular requirement for any particular stage, but rather on the presence of qualities from another stage which seem to conflict with the stage in question. He does not lack asceticism, but he has weapons as well ; he does not lack a wife, but he lives in the burning-grounds (rather than in a house) as well.

The stages of life meet in two ways in the mythology of Śiva : Pārvatī herself brings elements of the householder ethic into the world of asceticism when she leaves her father’s palace to marry Śiva, and he introduces elements of *tapas* into the tradition of married life by accepting her. This mirrors the symbiotic relationship of conventional and ascetic thought in the actual social order. Both Śiva and Pārvatī transgress the normal social order to unite the superficially opposed elements of *tapas* and *kāma* that are reconciled in the religious sphere and that, by implication, ought to be combined in ordinary life as well. The opposition on the mortal level is between the two goals : it is best to be a holy man, to give up all sensual pleasures, and it is best to beget sons, to fulfil one’s duties to society. This is of course a problem known to other cultures as well, but in Hinduism it is exaggerated, because nowhere on earth are passionless sages more venerated and nowhere are the ties of family and progeny, strengthened by caste strictures and the importance of rituals for the dead, more compelling. Man himself must be both procreative and ascetic ; so god must be the most ascetic of ascetics, the most erotic of lovers. He resolves the paradox in his own character by embodying a philosophy found throughout Hinduism : that chastity and sexuality are not opposed but symbiotic, that the chaste man is procreative by virtue of his chastity, and that the man who lives happily with his wife is performing a sacrament in his very life—if he but realizes it.

### I. CYCLES OF SEXUALITY AND ASCETICISM IN ŚIVA

The social phases embodied in the four-stage system appear on the cosmic level as a constant, cyclic readjustment in the forces of *tapas* and *kāma*, a waning and waxing of powers that can never be

<sup>173</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.15.61; cf. *MHB* XIII.17.56; Nīlakaṇṭha on *MHB* XIII.17.58 (Bombay).

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dispersed or destroyed, but only transmuted into one another. This interplay begins with the basic Hindu belief that ascetic power is destroyed by any sexual influence.<sup>174</sup> || || || Śiva himself is susceptible to this loss of his ascetic powers, and for this reason he destroys Kāma. When he enters his procreative phase, he is not immediately reduced in any way, for his ascetic powers *are* sexual powers. But eventually his powers are drained, and he must pass on to the next phase of the cycle :

After marrying Pārvatī, Śiva made love to her for a thousand years, but then he lost all of his *tejas* and his virility. Seeing himself thus diminished, Śiva resolved to perform *tapas*, and he undertook a great vow. . . . He said to Pārvatī, "My dear, the vow that I performed before gave me powers which I have now exhausted, for I lost my ascetic merit by making love to you day and night. Now I must again enter the forest and perform *tapas*."<sup>175</sup>

Even without the specific tradition of asceticism, Śiva must perform *tapas* in order to regain his lost powers in his role of vegetation god. As the representative of the powers of nature, he must, like nature itself, replenish from time to time the energies which he has spent.<sup>176</sup> Śiva exhausts his powers when he succumbs to Kāma. He then returns to his *tapas*, but, as the cycle continues, the *tapas* that he performs gives him still greater sexual powers than he had before the confrontation, just as Kāma himself is eventually magnified by his battle with Śiva.

### 1. TAPAS AS EXPIATION

*Tapas* is able to restore not only sexual power but moral power as well ; a part of the traditional expiation for sexual sins is the performance of vows of asceticism.<sup>177</sup> When Śiva wishes to seduce the wife of Bhadrāyu and Bhadrāyu protests that by so doing he will incur great evil, Śiva replies, "I can scatter with my *tapas* the sin of the slaughter of a Brahmin or the drinking of wine ; so what is the seduction of another man's wife to me ? Give me your wife."<sup>178</sup> For this reason, the wanderings of Śiva as a Kāpālika, particularly

<sup>174</sup> Dubois, *op. cit.*, p. 508; Manu 11.121-22; *Matsya* 3.39-40; 14.1-8.

|| || || See Part I, Section B1-2.

<sup>175</sup> Śiva, *Dharmasamhitā* 4.126-29; *Vāmana* 60.1-6.

<sup>176</sup> Jan Gonda, *Veda und älterer Hinduismus (Die Religionen Indiens, Vol. I [Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1963])*, p. 258.

<sup>177</sup> Manu 11.123; *Agni Purāṇa* (Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series No. 41 [Poona, 1957]), 169.18; cf. J. J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1930), p. 257n.; *MHB* XII.159.27 and .207.13; Manu 2.181-82, 11.106; *Vāyu* 1.18.7 and .14; commentaries cited by Georg Bühler (trans.), *The Laws of Manu* (Sacred Books of the East Vol. 25 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1886]), p. 452.

<sup>178</sup> Śiva 3.27.39-41.



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in the Pine Forest,<sup>179</sup> may be considered expiations for his well-known lustfulness, as well as for the acts of violence which are their ostensible cause.#### and his violation of the sages' wives is a re-enactment of the original sin which forced Śiva to undertake the expiation.<sup>180</sup> The tradition of *tapas* as expiation thus contributes to the image of the erotic ascetic; the women of the Pine Forest find the Kāpālīka particularly attractive, almost as if the very performance of his ascetic vow bears witness to his erotic vulnerability. One text states that Śiva must wander as a Kāpālīka with a skull in his right hand to replenish the powers lost by making love to Pārvatī.<sup>181</sup> In the later texts, purification is automatic: "One who drinks wine or makes love to the wife of another man or kills a Brahmin or seduces his guru's wife is released from all sins by *tapas*."<sup>182</sup> This is precisely the boast of Śiva to Bhadrāy. The *tapas* which thus restores Śiva also leads eventually into the next cycle of erotic activity; when Śiva has married Pārvatī he carries her into the bedroom "with powers made great by his meditation,"<sup>183</sup> powers specifically said to be "an abundance of the qualities to achieve sexual intercourse."<sup>184</sup> Śiva is said to make love to Pārvatī particularly well because of his *tapas* and to be able to continue to do so for hundreds of years.<sup>185\*\*\*\*\*</sup>

### 2. THE DANGEROUS EXTREMES OF CHASTITY AND SEXUALITY

As Śiva embodies the extremes of each aspect, he explores each one to its fullest, even absurd, extension. Though the net result of the myth is a balance, before that is achieved it may approach dangerous extremes in either or even both of its components. Both Śiva's sexuality and his chastity pose certain threats to the balance of the universe: his *tapas* generates great heat which menaces the world, like the *tapas* of any ascetic, until an *apsaras* (Pārvatī) is sent by Indra to disperse it.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, as Śiva embodies the

<sup>179</sup> G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Iconographie* (Vol. II, Archéologie du sud de l'Inde, Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1914), p. 32.

#### See above, Section F3.

<sup>180</sup> *Sāmba* 16.24-33; *Skanda* 5.2.8.1-5; cf. *Kūrma* 1.16.117-29; *Vāmana* 6.87.

<sup>181</sup> *Vāmana* 60.6.

<sup>182</sup> *Śiva* 5.12.45.

<sup>183</sup> *Kumārasambhava* 8.81.

<sup>184</sup> Mallinātha's commentary on *Kumārasambhava* 8.81.

<sup>185</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.27.31.

\*\*\*\*\* See Part I, Section D4, and cf. Part I, Section B4 and 5.

<sup>186</sup> Lieutenant Francis Wilford, "On Egypt and the Nile from the Ancient Books of the Hindus," *Asiatick Researches*, III (1792), 402, and "A Dissertation on Semiramus, the Origin of Mecca . . . from the Hindu Sacred Books," *Asiatick Researches*, IV (1795), 363 and 367.

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forces of nature, the universe ceases to function when he withdraws from worldly action. This is one of the implications of the Pine Forest myth, in which the universe is shattered when Śiva's *liṅga* falls. Another danger is that, as long as Śiva remains absorbed in meditation, he will be unable to undertake any functions such as creation or the killing of demons.<sup>187</sup> For these reasons, the gods object to his chastity and beg him to marry.

Yet the great majority of the Hindu myths depict Śiva's sexual activity as dangerous and his chaste aspect as a refuge; where sexual activity is motion and fire, chastity is quiescence and cool water. His auspicious form is chaste, while his terrible form destroys the universe.<sup>188</sup> His excessive sexual behavior weakens him so that he is unable to conquer demons, just as his excessive chastity places him *hors de combat*; his extreme devotion to his wife makes him a laughingstock.<sup>189</sup> But the greatest danger arising from his sexuality is the actual friction or heat generated by the activity itself, like the dangerous *tapas* of chastity; the effect of the extreme form of either of the opposed aspects is the same. When Śiva and Pārvatī make love, it is like a great, unwanted doomsday about to destroy the universe,<sup>190</sup> shaking the earth and the universe.<sup>191</sup> The love making of Śiva and Pārvatī can also be dangerous for the opposite reason, like their chastity—not because it generates too much activity, but because it causes them to withdraw from all other activity, so that the universe is in danger of running down.<sup>192</sup> While locked in Pārvatī's embrace, Śiva performs no sacrifice or *tapas*,<sup>193</sup> does nothing at all,<sup>194</sup> and deprives the gods of the sight of his person.<sup>195</sup> Even when the gods succeed in interrupting this dangerous act, they are left with the still more serious problem of the offspring of Pārvatī and Śiva, destined to be too powerful for the world to bear.<sup>196</sup> For this reason, Śiva's seed must be taken from him and used to generate a son else-

<sup>187</sup> *Vāmana* 21.10–18; *Kālikā* 4.7, 9.30, 5.68, *Śiva* 2.2.11.21–27, 2.2.16.8–19; V. S. Agrawala, *Śiva Mahādeva, the Great God: An Exposition of the Symbolism of Śiva* (Benares: Veda Academy, 1966), p. 12.

<sup>188</sup> *MHB* XIII.146.5–6; VII.173.94–97.

<sup>189</sup> *Padma* 6.11.7.

<sup>190</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.27.32.

<sup>191</sup> *Śiva* 2.4.1.44–46; *Mahābhāgavata* 29.11; *Kathāsaritsāgara* 3.6.73.

<sup>192</sup> From a tale current in the Punjab; personal communication from Dr. Chanchal Dhand of Jullundur.

<sup>193</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.22.68.

<sup>194</sup> *Śiva* 2.4.1.24.

<sup>195</sup> *Matsya* 158.29; *Skanda* 6.245.50–51, 6.246.1; *Kumārasambhava* 9.8.

<sup>196</sup> *Vāmana* 54.35–36; *Brahmānda* 3.10.23–24; *Kālikā* 48.12–24; *MHB* XIII.83.45; *Saura* 60.1–27; *Bṛhaddharma* 2.53.48–52; Dessigane *et al.*, *op. cit.*, No. 25, p. 35.

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where, diverting both the sexual heat of the couple and the martial heat of the son they would have had. Thus Śiva's *tapas* or his *kāma* may prevent the birth of a needed son or threaten to produce a dangerous son.

The forces of Śiva's chastity and sexuality can never be destroyed or turned back to their sources; the fire is never quenched, but its destructive power may be channeled into the next creative phase. Chastity develops into desire, and the fulfilment of desire leads to chastity. In Hindu terms, chastity builds up powers of *tapas* which are dissipated by sexual activity and then must be restored. When Śiva's chastity becomes extreme, he must be seduced by Pārvatī and Kāma, only to become excessively sexual and forced by the gods and Agni to become chaste again. Śiva himself varies his attributes in opposition to the qualities of other gods and sages, as if to set up a thermostatic control on their excesses, just as they do on his. *Tapas* and *kāma*, interchangeable forms of cosmic heat, replace and limit one another to maintain the balance of the universe.

### 3. PRAVRṬTI AND NIVṚṬTI

In some myths, *pravṛtti* (activity, worldly involvement) is contrasted with *nivṛtti* (quiescence, withdrawal), the former identified with sexual activity and the latter with asceticism. When Śiva ceases to create and becomes a pillar of chastity, he is said to have *nivṛtti* as his essence.<sup>197</sup> As an ascetic, he dwells in *nivṛtti* and shuns a wife, *pravṛtti*. His mind is quiescent (*nivṛttam*) when, after making love for many years, he is satisfied.<sup>198</sup>

But, as both *tapas* and *kāma* are forces of energy, *pravṛtti*, together they may be contrasted with their true opposite: quiescence, *nivṛtti*. Although quiescence is what Śiva usually *teaches*, for it is the favorite path of the ascetic schools which he represents, *pravṛtti* is what he himself usually *embodies*, pure life energy. Thus, though he is said to go to the Pine Forest to teach the sages to leave *pravṛtti* and devote themselves to *nivṛtti*,<sup>199</sup> he does this by dancing in wild, naked abandon with their wives. Although he refuses to marry, saying that he delights only in *tapas* and *nivṛtti*, with no use for *pravṛtti* and the ways of mistresses,<sup>200</sup> he does

<sup>197</sup> *Kūrma* 1.10.39.

<sup>198</sup> *Śiva* 2.2.16.31 and 35, 2.2.23.7.

<sup>199</sup> *Linga* 1.29.1-83, 1.31.21-45; *Kūrma* 2.38.2-6 and 129-31; cf. Rao, *op. cit.*, II, I, 302.

<sup>200</sup> *Kālikā* 9.47; *Śiva* 2.2.16.30-35.

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marry and even indulges in numerous adulteries.<sup>201</sup> The famous dancing Śiva, Nāṭarājā, is the very embodiment of *pravṛtti*.

The cycles of his sexuality may to a certain extent be read in terms of Tantric philosophy. During the Tantric rite, the devotee exhausts the forces of *pravṛtti*, the outgoing path, and begins to cultivate *nivṛtti*.<sup>202</sup> Śiva too must use both paths, must follow the outgoing path to prevent the accumulation of too great a power and then replenish that power by the path of *nivṛtti*. At Śiva's request, Brahmā substitutes for universal death the process of periodical action and quiescence.<sup>203</sup> Śiva himself is said to be the source of both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*,<sup>204</sup> the force of life and perfect peace.

Yet quiescence in Śiva is not a negative force, an absence of power; it is the ultimate solution to the problem of cycles. For Śiva, unlike the mortal yogi, need not alternate phases of sexual activity and yogic restoration, but may exist in both states simultaneously. This is the meaning of the ithyphallic yogi: "In many of his icons, he [Śiva] is ithyphallic; often he appears with his consort. At the same time he is the patron deity of yogis, identified as such by his piled-up mass of uncut and uncombed hair, and by his nudity. This is not inconsistent with his sexual vitality. For the source of the yogi's power is his own divine sexuality, conserved and concentrated by asceticism."<sup>205</sup> The ambiguous figure of the erotic ascetic is the only possible continuous manifestation of Śiva which can hold in suspension the two extremes of chastity and sexuality. The moment at which the two phases cancel each other out is the moment of *nivṛtti* in its broadest sense, the hiatus between the episodes of *pravṛtti*—chaste or sexual—an apparent calm which is in fact a perfectly balanced tension.

In many myths Śiva is merely an erotic or merely ascetic, as a momentary view of one phase or another. But in the great myths,

<sup>201</sup> *Skanda* 1.1.22.52; *Matsya* 155.31; *Brahma* 74.8–22; 75.31–50; *Brahmāṇḍa* 4.10.41–77; *Bhāgavata* 8.12.12–35; *Agni* 3.17–20; *Kālikā* 52.105–22; *Bhaviṣya* 3.4.17.67–78; *Śiva* 3.20.3–7; *Śiva*, *Dharmasaṃhitā* 10.32; Dessigane *et al.*, *op. cit.*, No. 59, pp. 76–77; Maity, *op. cit.*, pp. 79, 115, 120; Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 183; Dimock and Ramanujan, *op. cit.*, p. 304; Gustav Oppert, *On the Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsha or India* (London: Westminster & Co., 1893), p. 508.

<sup>202</sup> *Tantra Rahasya*, cited by J. G. Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon), *Śakti and Śākta: Essays and Addresses on the Śākta Tantrasāstras* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1959), p. 150.

++++ See Part I, Section D4.

<sup>203</sup> *MHB* VII, Appendix 1, No. 8, ll. 99–116.

<sup>204</sup> *Śiva* 3.8.14; *MHB* XIII.17.32.

<sup>205</sup> Philip Rawson, *Indian Sculpture* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1966), p. 48.

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transcending the limitations of mundane causality, he participates in cycles of cosmic dimensions which melt into a single image as they become ever more frequent, making an almost subliminal impression in their brief symbolic appearances, creating an infinitely complex mosaic which produces the ambivalent but not contradictory figure of the erotic ascetic. The conflict is resolved not into a static solution but rather into the constant motion of a pendulum, whose animating force is the eternal paradox of the myths.